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PREFACE.

—o—

I WERE jest a-tellin' Mrs. Padwick my opinions over women's sufferages, a-settin' between the lights, as the sayin' is, and 'ad finished our teas, and was a-thinkin' of takin' a turn in the Park afore dark, when the gal come to the back parlour door with a tap, and says, "Please, mum, here's a man with a message, as says it's a note, and he's to have a shillin' for it."

So says Mrs. Padwick, "Whatever for, and whoever can 'ave sent 'im? but," she says, "Let 'im wait outside the door, Liza Ann, till I reads it, for," she says to me, "I don't never let nobody in."

I says, "Right you are, for them parties as calls casual like I never will let cross my threshold, never since the night as that fellow called, a-pretendin' as he come from the dyer's for a shawl to clean, as I 'ad one I were a-goin' to send, as he couldn't 'ave knowed, and went off with Brown's new overcoat, tho' new it were not, but as good as

new, thro' bein' bought off a gentleman's servant as 'ad died of the creepin' palsy, so in course nothink ketchin'."

Well, by that time, Mrs. Padwick had got the gas alight, and takes and looks at this bit of a note, as were a dirty, crumply bit of paper, and werry bad ritin'.

So she says arter a bit, "Why, Martha, wotever do this mean?"

I says, "Not a-knowin' cannot say."

"Why," she says, a-readin' on it, "listen! 'You'll be sorry to 'ear of the death of your old friend, Mrs. Brown, and give the bearer a shillin'. Signed, yours ever, Brown.'"

I says, a-takin' the paper, "That's never Brown's ritin', as 'ave a 'and like a copper plate, as the sayin' is; besides," I says, "bless you, he never rote it, not even in fun, as wouldn't be one to make sich a undecent joke over my death, but," I says, "there's more Mrs. Browns than one in the world besides me."

"Oh!" she says, "but I don't know no other than you."

The gal she come to the door, and says, as the young man said he couldn't wait, and must 'ave the shillin'.

I says, "'Ave 'im in, and we'll 'ave a look at 'im."

He didn't much want to come in, but stood on the door-mat all of a fidget.

Says Mrs. Padwick, "Do you know Mrs. Brown?"

"Oh! yes," says he, "years ago, when she lived jest off the Commercial Road, leastways," he says, "my brother did."

Well, I were a-watchin' him thro' the crack of the door, and thought as I knowed 'is face somewheres, as were a little, common, under-sized feller, but couldn't think where I'd see 'im.

So says Mrs. Padwick, "Who give you this note."

He says, "A gentleman."

I thinks to myself, "It wasn't never no gentleman as rote that."

Says this feller, as I kep' a-lookin' at, and I see were a partikler dirty-lookin', bandy-leg chap, "I'm in a 'urry, so let me 'ave the shillin'."

Mrs. Padwick says, "You go back to 'im as sent you and say as it won't wash, and if you wants a shillin' he'd better give you one 'isself; and as to Mrs. Brown bein' dead, why, you may tell 'im he'll be glad to 'ear she's as well, if not better than ever; so you be off, or I shall jest give you in charge."

He begun a-whimperin', a-sayin' "As he were a poor man, as 'ad left his work for this job, as he

wouldn't 'ave took, but thro' wantin' every shillin' as he could pick up."

Says Mrs. Padwick, "Then try and earn one 'onest, and not go in for no imposition, like them as put you up to this; so be off with you, and don't try no more such tricks on me."

Well, that fellow cut off like a lamplighter, as the sayin' is, thro' a perlice 'appenin' to pass the door jest as he were goin' out.

Well, when he were off, thro' it bein' too late for to go out, me and Mrs. Padwick had a game at six-card cribbage till supper time, as is 'arf-past nine, thro' her nephew not a-gettin' away from his work till past nine; as is a warehouseman in the dry goods line, as is wot the Merrykins calls linen-drapers.

It was pretty nigh a week arter that as the perlice called in one mornin', and said as we was wanted, both me and Mrs. Padwick, to indemnify a feller as 'ad been took up for gettin' money under false pretences, a-sayin' as he'd been sent by Mr. Brown to collect money.

So in course we went off to that there perlice court close agin Regency Street, as was werry close and full, and 'ad to wait a good bit with werry low characters as was werry stuffy, a-waitin' about, and some with babbies in their arms, and awful black eyes, as come to swear their lives agin their 'usban's.

Arter a bit we was called in afore the magistrate, as were werry perlite to me, the same as the party as made me swear for to speak the truth, as is my 'abits, and there I see that bandy-legged chap in the dock. Then the magistrate says, "Do you know the prisoner at the bar?" "Yes," I says, "my Lord; leastways, I've seen 'im afore, thro' the crack of the door last week."

"Wot was you a-doin' behind the door," says a feller in front, a-turnin' on me.

I says, "I were a-peepin' thro' the crack for to see if I knowed the party as 'ad come to say as I were dead, a-tryin' to get money under false pretences by my name."

Says the feller, "How do you mean? there's other Mrs. Browns in the world besides you; you ain't everybody."

I says, "I never said I were."

"What is your good gentleman?" says the magistrate.

"Why," I says, "he were brought up to the turnin' trade, but always 'ad a 'ankerin' arter machinery, and when we was fust married 'ad a steam crane to manage, the fust as ever were used in the Docks, as he kep' to till he come to be so clever at steam as he've been employed over railroads for the last seven years."

"Then," says he, "he never were a waiter."

I says, "Never in this world."

"Well, then," says the feller, as were a sort of a lawyer, "you ain't the party as he said were dead."

I says, "Preaps not; but why come to my friends and try to frighten 'em, and then do 'em out of a shillin' for 'is lies?" So I says, a-turnin to the magistrate, "I do 'ope as your wushi will serve 'im out, for he really 'ave made my friends werry un'appy, and I knows all about 'im now."

And so I did, for Mrs. Challin she were up at that Perlice Court, and 'ad told me all about 'im, as brought 'im back to my recollections as fresh as paint, as the sayin' is, as 'appened years ago; and if he wasn't one of a gang of boys as did used to be a reg'lar pest all about the Commercial way, and tried to steal my sheets as were a-'angin' out, and then said, when ketched a-tryin' to get 'old on 'em, as he'd 'eard as I wanted to sell 'em.

He was a reg'lar low lot, thro' bein' born in the workus, and prenticed by the Parish to a tinman, as he took and robbed, and were sent to prison, but only come out wuss than afore, and then got a place at a bookstall thro' charity, as he robbed his employer on, and then run away and weren't 'eard on for some time. Some says he were in prison all the time, and then turned up agin sellin' unproper

books under a false name, and is well knowed to the perlice.

So when the magistrate says to me, "Do you mean to press the charge, Mrs. Brown?" I says "No, my lord, thro' not a-bearin' 'im no mallis, and my good gentleman is out of town, not as he'd notice this waggerbone, as is a poor despisable lyin' villin, and I 'ave 'eard say as one time when he 'ad money wouldn't 'elp to keep 'is own mother as 'adn't no lawful claim on 'im." So I says, "Let 'im go this time as far as I'm concerned; but if he ever comes across me agin I'll give 'im a hot 'un."

Says a perliceman, "I shall ask for a remand, for there's lots of charges agin 'im, for he's been a stealin' books right and left."

When he 'eard that he begun to 'owl, and was in a great fright aperiently, and says, "Oh, Mrs. Brown, speak a good word for me." So I only shook my umbreller at 'im a-goin' out of Court, and says, "If you don't turn over a new leaf, my fine feller, you'll come to the gallus, and not 'ave no mother to bite 'er ear off like the one in Esor's Fables, as I considers served 'er right for puttin' of them goats' skins over 'is arms to deceive 'is old father by passin' of 'im off for 'is brother."

So I makes my obedience to the magistrate, and says, "Next time as he makes free with my name, my lord, I've got a rod in pickle for 'im, c o

in course if he'd been in want and asked me for a shillin', why I might 'ave give it 'im; or even to them others as rote them lies about me bein' dead." Cos I know'd it weren't the bandy-legged one as rote it, for I knows he can't rite, but some arf-starved cadger as is one of 'is pals, and there's lots on 'em about, many on 'em jail birds, as gets up them swindles together, but can't hurt me, cos as to sayin' I'm dead, any one can find out that's a false'ood; and as to Brown a-ritin' about me, if he did he wouldn't rite a parcel of lies, but the truth, as is stranger than fictshun, as the sayin' is.

So 'ome I went, and I'm sure if I 'ad told the magistrate arf wot I'd 'eard about that feller he'd 'ave give 'im penal servitude for life, only it ain't no business of mine, and as I says, "Give 'im rope enuf and he'll 'ang 'imself."

I were 'ome in good time thro' not a-stoppin' with Mrs. Padwick, and when I'd jest put the place to rights a bit arter my bit of dinner, in who should come but Brown, a-lookin' the picter of 'ealth, as Birmingham always do give 'im a fresh look, so I were a-tellin' 'im about that artless oaks over my death, as I says, "I'm glad you ain't 'eard on, or it would 'ave give you a turn."

He says, "Not a bit on it; but all as I've got to say is, if I do put my foot down on such a lyin'

set of scoundrels I'll stamp 'em out as I would a nest of wipers."

So I see as Brown were in earnest, and dropped the subject; but am glad as he didn't 'appen to be in at Mrs. Padwick's when that bandy-leg objec come with 'is lies, or he'd 'ave give 'im a weltin' on the spot, as'd 'ave been 'is deserts; but no man 'ardly wouldn't care to strike such a poor mean white-livered wretch as that, and it's best to leave 'im to the workus, as'll be 'is end no doubt if he don't rot in jail, as might 'ave been a 'onest upright man if he'd kep' straight and 'ave done as he'd be done by, and not be a-covetin' other men's goods, as is wot they did ought to 'ave learnt 'im in the workus even, as is wot makes so many thieves in the world, thro' not a-knowin'; but then there's some as is that spiteful if they sees others a-gettin' on, that they'll do their werry uttermost to do 'em a injury.

But I'm thankful to say, for my part, I don't envy nobody, and am thankful as I'm as well off as I am, and as to parties a-runnin' me down, why, that's 'uman natur that is; but I can 'old my own and plenty of friends to back me, and as to them as tries to undermine me, they are that utterly despisable, like the dirt under my feet, as if I were to answer 'em it would be a-doin' jest wot they want, and bring 'em into notice; but there's more ways

of killin' a dog than 'angin' 'im, as the sayin' is; and if I ketches any whelpin' curs a-barkin' at my 'eels, I knows 'ow to get their ears and tails cropped pretty short, as may end in bein' found out as receivers of stolen goods, as it is well beknown the receiver is wuss than the thief, tho' he's bad enuf, and will be found out some day when he least espects it.

And as I were a-sayin', I may be a wore out silly old woman to talk, in some parties' opinions, but if I talked rubbish I shouldn't be listened to like I am; and what's more, no one can say I talk to take away people's characters, or do them any 'arm, and I'm sure if I was to say anything as were to any one's detriment, I wouldn't never stoop to tell a lie to get out of it, like that Mrs. Dickson, as called poor old Mrs. Motherwell anythink but a lady behind 'er back in the bar of the Blue Lion, afore witnesses; and when they was a-goin' to 'ave the law on 'er for it, if she didn't knock under and declare on 'er word as a lady that she'd never meant Mrs. Motherwell at all, and weren't even illudin' to 'er, tho' she'd been a-boastin' of abusin' 'er, and said as she was only a-waitin' for 'er to die, to back-bite 'er memory.

And if there's parties as is tired on me, let em listen to somebody else; but as for me, I shall go on talkin' as long as there's any listeners, and

there's more of 'em now than there ever 'as been afore, so let 'em as wants to be 'eard 'ave their say, but not turn nasty and try to take any one's bread out of their mouth thro' spite, as is low ways and reg'lar mean-sperrited. But, law, arter all, there must be cadgers, as tries to live on any garbage they can pick up; and I'm sure whenever I've seen 'em a-'angin' about my door, I've give 'em a bit of cold meat, or anythink like that, poor wretches; but they didn't ought to go and turn on me, and splash my door with mud, as don't do me no 'arm, and only dirts their fingers; but then in course they're used to dirty jobs, and never knows wot clean 'ands is; so it comes nat'ral to 'em to do anythink as is low, and in course if you've got a spiteful naybour as can't bear to see you gettin' on, they'll set these low characters at you and give 'em a trifle for the job. But as I said afore, next time they tries on any of their low games on me in my good man's name, I'll espose the waggerbones in their proper lights.

MRS. BROWN ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS.

—o—

Mrs. Padwick, she's wot she calls one for progress she is, tho' she can't never exactually say wot it means, cos we often 'as a talk over it, and I've said to 'er, I've said, "Well, but do tell me wotever you means by progress. Cos," I says, "if it means everyone a-over reachin' everyone else, and robbin' 'is naybour, I don't see what good that'll do."

"Cos," I says, "in course it would be progress for the roughs, if they could get 'old of all the money in the bank, and spend their day in skittles and beer; and if servants can be the masters and missuses, that's progress for them; and in course it would be progress for the Rooshuns if they could collar the Turks jest as the Germins 'ave the French, and in course, when one man can rob another, and get off with the swag, that's progress for the thief."

I'm sure when I see parties a-ridin' in their

carridges, and livin' in grand 'ouses, as a few years ago was a-standin' behind their counters, and 'ad to borrer a pail of water thro' their own bein' cut off, in course, I knows that's progress for them; but 'ows the money been made is what I wants to know! Is it got by fair means? or is it made out of under payin' and over workin' them as they employs?

Cos jest look at the wages as they gets in the country, as some places ain't enuf to keep body and soul together, as the sayin' is, and then see the parties as the property belongs to comes up to town squanderin' their money, and livin' like downright 'eathens, as pre'aps their grandfathers swept out a ware'ouse, or went about collectin' rags and bottles, as in course is progress; but 'ow is it to end is what I wants to know.

"Ah!" says Mrs. Padwick, "that's true, but we can't stop it."

I says, "In course not, cos it's like a 'orse a-runnin' away down a 'ill, as the only thing is to look out as he don't knock you over, but don't stand a-shoutin' at 'im, as'll only encourage 'im in 'is madways, but," I says, "in my opinion, if parties would only do a little more as they'd be done by, that would be real progress, and them fieldmales as is a-goin' on a-talkin' about women's rights and all manner like that, if they was only to

look at 'ome they'd find plenty for to set right there, and not go a-meetin' at Andover Square Rooms about rubbish as is only jaw arter all, cos," I says, "the men 'ave got the power in their 'ands, and they'll keep it."

Says Mrs. Padwick to me "Wot, then it's your opinions as to women's rights ain't worth a-standin' up for?"

I says, "That depends," I says, "on what you considers rights, for," I says, "there's a many as don't know their rights from wrongs, nor yet rights from lefts, the same as old Mrs. Treadwell, as always wore straights, poor thing, thro' 'avin' insteps as was swelled up like dough, so could wear 'er shoes on both feet, immaterial, as certingly is a great convenience gettin' up in a 'urry, the same as me the week afore last, to let in the sweeps as 'ad been ringin' the 'ouse down, and me a-knowin' as the gal slept 'eavy; I says to Brown, 'I'll let 'em in, as am glad they've been and come,' so stepped out of bed all in a 'urry, and puts on my shoes wrong, with a shawl over my shoulders to let 'em in.

"I'd got to the top of the kitchen stairs, as I wouldn't let 'em in by the front door, thro' not wishin' 'em to mess my new ile cloth, and thro' me 'avin' on my shoes wrong, got my foot ketched in the mat, and pitched 'ead foremost down the stairs, as ain't werry far, it's true, but would 'ave shook me

a good deal if the master sweep adn't ketched me in 'is open arms at the bottom, as saved my neck pre'aps, but smutted me from 'ead to foot.

"'Owever he'd got in I couldn't think, tho' thankful for 'is 'elp, but found out as the gal 'ad got down before me and opened the airey door.

"I 'urried back to my room a-sneezin' like mad thro' sut as got up my nose, jest as Brown were a-turnin' out, as busts out a-larfin', and says 'Well, Martha, you may be glad to 'ave got the sweeps, but 'adn't no call for to 'ug 'im;' and, certingly I were a figger, all sut from 'ead to foot, not as Brown were the least put out, tho' he did keep on larkin' and charfin' about me and the master sweep."

Says Mrs. Padwick, "Well," she says, "I'll back you, Martha, for to wander off from anythink as you're a-talkin' about. Why, wotever 'as your shoes and the sweeps to do with the women's rights?"

"Why," I says, "one thing brings on another into your 'ead; but," I says, "I'm sure I don't know what some women is a-drivin' at, for," I says, "there was a party in the name of Tatpole as 'ad did used to wisit at Mrs Plummer's, as wore 'er 'air cut short and a man's jacket, and smoked a pipe like a man, and could floor 'er licker like a day labourer.

"Well, I 'eard 'er a-talkin' about 'avin' give a lecture over women, at wot they calls a conflerence. She wanted to reduce the men to a mere set of siphons, or else as the men should be a set of molly-coddles, a-lookin' arter the 'ouse, and let their wives do all the men's work out of doors, with all the rowin' and scoldin'

"Cos it stands to reason as it would never do for both man and wife to be masters, but that Miss Tatpole, as in course were a old maid, as looked nearer fifty nor forty, she said as women was equal to anythink.

"So I only says to Mrs. Grundy, as is a great 'and at wot she calls sociable science, I says, 'Mrs. Grundy, escuse me, mum, but,' I says, 'ow does that good lady propose a-managin' when she's up stairs, and can't be a-goin' to business, or settin' as a judge, or goin' into action in a battle? or jest fancy a wessel a-goin' to sea manned by fieldmales, they'd cut a nice figger a-goin' up aloft, and 'owever could a decent woman be a bricklayer's labourer? No,' I says, 'women 'as their labours cut out for 'em, and did ought to be thankful as they've got 'usban's for to work for 'em and keep a good 'ome over their 'eads.'

"Says that Miss Tatpole, 'We shall 'ope to 'ave Mrs. Brown at our great meetin', and if she'll give

us 'er views we shall be thankful to 'ear a woman of 'er esperience speak 'er mind.'

"I see she were a-sneerin', so I says, 'Escuse me,' I says, 'I don't pretend to no larnin', and never smoked a pipe in my life, nor yet dressed up like a man, but,' I says, 'I've been a wife and a mother too, many a year, and I do know wot a woman's dooty is, as is werry simple; but,' I says, "if you young ladies thinks as you'll ketch 'usban's by a-makin' out as you're as good men as they are, I think as you'll find out your herror, preaps when too late."

"Up jumps that Miss Tatpole, and says as it were a hinsult to ev'ry single lady in the room for this person to speak like that.

"I says, 'I may be a person, but I ain't a sort of 'ighbred, as they calls mules; and,' I says, 'if a woman's a woman, let 'er be one and a true one, and then a man will love and respect 'er, whether he's 'er 'usban', or 'er son, or 'er brother, but when a woman don't keep within them bounds as decency pints out, why then she may espect insults.'"

So says Mrs. Padwick, "Martha," says she, "you speaks like a book."

"Well, I may or I may not," I says; "but any 'ow I weren't a goin' to set and 'ear them dressed-up donkeys talkin' rubbish; not as I means to say as women 'asn't no wrongs, poor

things, but as far as I can make out, every one 'as their wrongs the same as their faults, and we shan't never alter them as long as this world lasts."

"Yes," says Mrs. Padwick, "but things might be mended, and it's a shame as women should be treated like dogs and wuss, for there's many a man as wouldn't dare treat a dog as he does 'is wife, a-knowin' of his teeth bein' that sharp, and," she says, "I'm sure it's enuf to make one sick to 'ear the fuss as is made about a man a-beatin' a 'orse, and then to see 'ow cool they takes a willin killin' 'is wife."

I says, "It's a deal on it cant, not as I 'olds with any one a-ill-treatin' a poor dumb animal; but," I says, "many thinks as a woman can take 'er own part."

"Wot!" says Mrs. Padwick, "take 'er own part agin a great strong brute as'll kick 'er life arf out and then get six weeks, and 'er preaps never the same woman agin, and carry 'is ill-usage to the grave, tho' she may live in misery thro' it many a year, as might be purtected by law if so be as women 'ad their suffrages, cos," she says, "in course she'd nat'rally wote for 'er own sect, as I'm sure there's a many as 'ave 'ad their bit of property swallowed up in drink by a lazy wretch, as only married 'er for the bit of money, and then turns

and be'aves like a brute, as anyone did ought to be purtected from sich treatment, as in course a short hact would settle, and then be able for to defy sich a willin."

I says, "That's as true as the book, and I'm sure," I says, "as to women's rights, partikler their suffrages, why, anyone might make a book out of wot I've seed on 'em myself, not as any decent woman would like to have it all rote and printed like the Newgate Calendar."

Tho' that is a book I do delight in, thro' a-bringin' back to my mind a many things as I've 'eard my dear mother speak on scores of times; the same as the Mar's murder, as lived in the same street along with the Williamses, as was all butchered on Ratliff 'Ighway, follerin' Saterday nights, and never found out, tho' the party as were took up for it 'anged 'isself in Newgate thro' bein' refused pen and ink, as was meant, no doubt, for 'is last dyin' speech and confession, as would in course 'ave been a satisfaction to the jury.

But, law bless me, in them times they did used to 'ang 'em by the dozen at a time, and I've heard speak of one judge as considered it 'is bounden dooty to go reg'lar to church, and 'ang everyone as he could lay 'is 'ands on. But things is werry different now, for when a judge and jury have left anyone for death, as the sayin' is, in steps parties

as rites to the newspapers and says as they shan't be 'ung, as is wot I calls defeatin' the ends of justice.

Cos wotever is the use of payin' them judges if every one else can try parties for nothing, as would be a great savin' to the country, and no occasion for law courts to be built, nor yet juries 'avin' their time took up, as don't all get a guinea a day like them as tried that there Claimint.

And there's a many 'as to neglect 'omes and business to be juries, the same as poor young Ablit, as were drawed for the militier and the jury the same time, and fined for not attendin' to both, tho' a delicate young man in the soap and candle line, besides bein' 'ard of 'earin' and a Plymouth Brother a'ready, as don't consider it lawful for to carry arms, so in course couldn't never even get thro' 'is drillin' proper, poor fellow, thro' a dreadful squint as made "eyes right" nothink but a 'oller mockery.

I shouldn't for my part never 'ave took up no women's rights nor wrongs neither but for Mrs. Padwick's cousin by the father's side, as come in while we was talkin' together, and is a reg'lar old winegar cruet in the name of Matilda Snapley, and one of them red-'ot strong minds, tho' if she got 'er rights would 'ave 'er lips sowed up in my opinion for a scold, and might 'ave talked till she were all as blue as 'er nose if it 'adn't been as she thought fit for to attack me over the werry tea-table jest for

makin' a remark as I did not consider a-dissectin' room a fit place for a lady to be found in a-larkin' along with a parcel of students, and makin' game over a post mortal.

Says Miss Snapley, "I suppose you'd like us all to know as much about the 'uman frame as you do."

"Well," I says, "you'd do pretty well if you did; for," I says, "I've forgot more about sickness than you ever knowed; and as to nursin'," I says, "I shouldn't be afeard to go to Queen Wictoria 'erself, as I'm thankful to know don't want no nursin', nor the Princess of Wales neither, bless 'em; but if they did, might both trust theirselves to me like a infant from the month, thro' esperience."

"Ah!" says Mrs. Denton, a-chimin' in to please Miss Snapley, as is a widder without no family, "many's the child as you've dosed to death, I'll be bound, with your Dolbys and your soothin' serrups."

I says, "Well, one good thing you can't say as ever I dosed yourn," as shet 'er up, thro' 'avin' no family, bein' a sore pint with 'er thro' losin' property by it, as went to distant cousins.

I weren't a-goin' to be put down, so I says, "Dolby's aint no 'arm but a good thing give in moderation, not as I ever were one to give none of them things, thro' well a-rememberin' a 'ussey of a gal

as took and give a infant that overdose of some serrup as made it sleep the clock round, and then couldn't 'ardly be roused, and went off with water on the brain in teethin', as is in general the trial when the 'ead shuts, as I 'ave knowed it myself keep open over eighteen months."

Miss Snapley says, "What terrible ignorance a-classin' them things together!"

So them words puts me up, and I says, "When you've got a family preaps you'll know more about classin' 'em."

If she didn't take and bust into tears and leave the room a-sobbin', a-sayin' as she were a-goin', as she 'adn't never been so insulted, and might 'ave married scores upon scores.

I says, "Not all at once, I 'opes," as made her slam the door arter 'er, and tell Mrs. Padwick as she never would set down with me as a friend agin.

So as I didn't want no words or nothink unpleasant, I told Mrs. Padwick as I'd go to 'ear the werry next lecture on removin' of women's dissybilities as Miss Snapley were a-goin' to give, as I knowed would please 'er.

"Not as," I says, "I knows wot it's all about, tho' I 'ave certingly 'eard speak of parties bein' in their dishybills, as I thought meant afore they'd tidied theirselves up of a day; and if Acts of Parlyment is a-goin' to step in and interfere with sich

things, why, there'll soon be no callin' of your soul your own, as the sayin' is, nor yet changin' your gownd when you likes, for I'm sure if I 'ad to be dressed up the fust thing in the mornin' there's lots of little odd jobs as I should never get thro' with my stays on; and as to preservin', I could no more stand over the fire with my 'air on than I could fly."

It were a nasty raw chilly evenin' as that lecture were goin' to be give on, as were another of them conflerences; so we 'ad a early cup of tea, me and Mrs. Padwick, and I did feel so creepy up and down my back, that Mrs. Padwick says to me, "Martha, you're a-layin' up sickness by the bushel, I can see, if you don't let me give you three teaspoons at the werry least in your next cup," as ain't teaspoons not the reg'lar size, but more like what any one would use for a egg.

I must say as I felt a deal warmer and altogether more myself like arter it, so a-puttin' on my warm Wittel over my linsey woolsey, I felt equal to the night air, as was only goin' as far as the other end of the Edgeware Road, as is close agin the canal where 'Annah Brown's 'ead, as wasn't no ways connected with me, were found in the Lock Gate, as that willin' Greenacre murdered over in Bowyer Lane, as is now got the name changed.

I knows the part well, as is a little way down the Walworth Road—leastways below where Cam-

berwell Gate did used to stand as the busses runs to from the Regency Park.

Me and Mrs. Padwick was a-talkin' of it over, as we went along, thro' both a well rememberin' of it, when all of a sudden I was took that giddy as must 'ave pitched 'ead foremost into the road all but for a lamp-post as I clutched 'old on, little a-thinkin' as it 'ad 'ad a coat of that beastly parish paint that werry arternoon, as made it slip thro' my fingers like a greasy pole, and down I come a-settin' flat on the kerbstone.

It give Mrs. Padwick a orful turn a-seein' me fall, as lift me up she couldn't were it ever so; not till two fieldmales as were a-passin' lent a 'and, but thro' bein' a couple of fools, let me go agin thro' larfin', and werry nigh sent me a-rollin' under a dray as were passin'.

The men as belonged to it 'ad me up in no time and put me on my legs, as made me feel that grateful to 'em, so I says, "I thanks you both, and would you take a glass of ale after your trouble?"

They both says as a little sperrits would suit better, thro' bein' sick of beer.

So we goes into a reg'lar 'ansom' lunchin bar place, all lookin'-glass, and Mrs. Padwick she took and borrered a cloth and tried for to rub me down and get that paint off, but only made a smeary mess on me.

So I says, "Let me alone and give me a drain, and wotever you do don't ask me to mix my lickers, cos I will not;" so stuck to my cognac, as I 'ad two small lickures on, for fear as the smell of the paint should affect me.

They'd got on the counter werry nice little flat green glass bottles as was meant for samples for parties to take 'ome, and could almost go in your glove.

So, 'avin' a misgivin' as we was a-goin' into a close sort of a place, and that paint a-'angin' about me, I knowed there wouldn't be no gettin' out on, not if it were to save your life, 'owever faint you might turn, I thought as I'd be forearmed agin a axcidence by taking one of them bottles.

Them dray-men was werry civil and offered to give me and Mrs. Padwick a lift on the dray, as they said the sharps on was as easy ridin' as your own carriage or a arm chair.

In course they meant it well, tho' out of the question for a lady. So I says, "You're werry good, but," I says, "I never can't believe as it aint 'ighly dangerous even for you to set on them sharps a-sleepin', as I've see you myself, as a jerk of the wheel might send you under it, and never be alive to tell the tale the next minit."

"Oh," says one on 'em, "we takes our chance."

It's my opinion as both them men was a little on, or they wouldn't never 'ave thought as two ladies would go a-ridin' on a brewer's dray.

So we 'turned 'em a-many thanks, and paid for the rum, as they'd took to werry kindly, and off we goes for to find the place where the lecture were to be give.

I never did see such a woman as Mrs. Padwick for findin' out places wrong; for to begin with, she's left 'anded, so always takes the wrong turnin', a-goin' to the right when told left, and when once she's took a thing in 'er 'ead old Scratch 'isself couldn't get it out agin.

I'm sure I don't know where we wandered to, a-lookin' arter that 'All; but I'm certing I should 'ave took my death but for that little glass bottle as keep the life in me, and didn't 'old more than a wine glass arter all said and done, as was a dooty to take a-waitin' about as I did, while Mrs. Padwick kep a-dodgin' in and out of shops, as she'd be a-talkin' over ever so long, a-askin' for the lecture 'All; as we found at last up a blind alley, with a werry dirty lamp over the door.

So I says, "Is this the place? Why, surely no Members of Parlyment aint a-comin' to sich a 'ole as this; for I'd 'eard Miss Snapley a-braggin' as Purfessor Fairplay were a-goin' to take up the question in the chair, along with a old lady in the

name of Mill, and a good many more as all 'oped to be in Parlyment afore they died.

It were a pretty fair-sized room, and tho' not a-many people all about it, most on 'em women and boys.

I see Miss Snapley on the platform a-talkin' and standin' near a werry stout party in the chair, as were a-noddin' wisible all the while.

So I slips quiet into a seat, and pulls Mrs. Padwick arter me.

It were a form as we set down on the one end on, without ever a-thinkin' of our weights, as was 'eavier than a skinny little man a-settin' at the other end; so when we set down, up he flies in the air like a shettlecock, and come down such a bump on the floor, while both me and Mrs. Padwick slipped off with a flop, and the form it took and toppled over, and ketched them as was settin' behind across the toes pretty sharp.

There was a nice row; the old lady in the chair, as proved to be a man, gets up and 'ollers "Order," and 'it a table as were afore 'im; and there was a reglar uproar.

I 'adn't 'ardly got on to my seat, when that Miss Snapley says, "Mr. Chairman, I requests the instant removal of that unwieldy old woman on the floor down there, as 'ave only come here to make a disturbance."

I says, "If you're a-illudin' to me," I says, a-startin' on my feet, "I aint no more unwieldy than my naybours," and I says,—

"Order, order," 'ollars a lot.

"Oh!" I says, "if it comes to that, I can order wot I please, and pay for wot I orders."

"Set down," says one. "Come out," says Mrs. Padwick.

"I shan't," says I. "If this 'ere meetin' is for women's rights, I'm as good a woman as any on you, and will claim 'em."

"'Ear, 'ear!" says one or two.

"Yes," I says, "and glad I am as I am 'ere, and will not be put upon."

The chairman he 'its the table werry 'ard, and says "Order!" "Chair!"

"Well!" I says, "give me a chair, for these forms is so low when once I'm down I can't get up, and bein' up I'm afraid of goin' down."

Says the chairman, "Bring 'er up 'ere and let us 'ear what she may 'ave to say."

Every one give three cheers, made way for me, and upon that platform I got, as creaked a good deal under me.

I looks all round and see lots of faces, and ketched sight of Miss Snapley a-glarin' at me. I were a-goin' to speak, but some'ow my 'ead begun to swim, as is a thing I've been subject to ever since

I cut my eye-teeth across, and my dear mother 'as told me often as she never took 'er clothes off for seven nights and days, espectin' as every breath would be my last.

I tried to speak, but my breath were gone, and I 'ad sich a fit of hiccups as made me think as I were a-goin' off into convulsions. I struggled wiolent to undo my shawl and bonnet, and all as I could oller was "Hair! give me hair!"

'Ow they got me out I don't know, but am pretty nigh certing as I never should 'ave drawed another breath alive if I 'adn't got out some'ow, not as there was any occasions for some on 'em to dash cold water in my face, as drenched me to the skin, and spilte my shawl and bonnet-strings; and I don't remember no more till I was a-settin' in a strange place, as I knowed wasn't Mrs. Padwick's back parlor, and a doctor feelin' my pulse.

So I pulls away my 'and from 'im, and I says, "There ain't no occasions for nothink of that. I've 'ad one of my attacks as I'm subject to arter takin' of a chill."

"Well," says he, "then next time you'd better take it with the chill off," and out he goes a-larfin' over it, a hignorant fleebottomizin' puppy, as is what I once 'eard a first-class physician call one of them gin'ral practitioners, as I won't never let practition on me.

Mrs. Padwick says to me when he were gone, "Why," she says, "Martha, it must 'ave been that srub as we took when we give them draymen the drain as disagreed with you."

I says, "You'll escuse me, but I never tasted no srub, as is a thing as is pison to me thro' a turnin' that acid, specially arter tea."

"Well," she says, "you certingly did take srub, and more than that you took off my second glass by mistake, a-thinkin' as it were your own, as 'ad your thoughts no doubt so took up with that drayman a-tellin' you about his wife and the twins."

"Well," I says, "I will not contradict, but," I says, "I'm sure if I took srub I must 'ave been a-thinkin' of somethink else, for," I says, "I well remembers a-sayin' to the party at the bar as 'ad 'er 'air dyed yaller, as I'd take a thimblefull of cream and noyeau, as is a thing you might give any one within the month, as I well knows."

"Well," she says, "there's no use a-talkin' about it, but you certingly did be'ave werry odd over that Women's Rights meetin', and no wonder you was turned out when you told 'em as they was all a lot of maggin' old maids as 'ad took and turned sour."

I says, "Never!"

"Well," she says, "it'll all be in the paper, as comes out of a Wednesday, as is called the *Paddington Paul Pry*."

"Then," I says, "if there's a word agin my character I'll indite 'em for a noosance, and I knows as any magistrate will commit 'em, for," I says, "I'm that well known as to be able to 'old my 'ead up agin any one; but," I says, "do you mean to insiniwate as I'd been a-takin' anythink in the way of a drop too much?"

"No," she says, "I don't think it could 'ave been that, for you only 'ad three teaspoons in your tea and then a drop of noyeau, though you certingly did put your lips to my srub unawares."

"Ah!" I says, "I never could 'ave knowed wot I were doin', for the werry smell on it gives me 'artburn; and," I says, "it is true as I did buy one of them shillin' bottles of cognac, as a safeguard agin the paint; but it 'ad been watered shameful, and only put my lips to it, for thro' not a-puttin' the cork in tight, it run all out into my pocket, and 'ave soaked my 'ussif thro' and thro'."

Says Mrs. Padwick, "Owever you can be that imprudent, Martha, I can't think, as to put a glass bottle in your pocket, as might be your death a-settin' down as 'eavy as you do; as less 'ave been knowed to bring on lock-jaw, as caused Mrs. Trimlet's death thro' a gimlet, as she were a-goin' to tap 'er orange wine with, as in course wouldn't flow without a went peg;" but she says, "I've sent for a cab, and we'll go 'ome."

I says, "I feel as tho' that paint off the lamp-post 'ad worked into my constitution, as is cheap filth as I never could bear the smell on the werry best."

She says, "Come on; it's full late;" so 'ome we went, and I wouldn't take nothink but some strong tea, for that paint 'ad made me feel dreadful all overish.

I were a good deal put out at Mrs. Padwick illudin' to that srub, as I'm sure I never touched; and as to wot I'd took affectin' my 'ead, why, it would no more than a drop of water.

But I certingly were pretty nigh drove mad when that Miss Snapley come in, and said as I'd brought disgrace on my sect by a-comin' that figger all be-daubed, and be'avin' like that at a public meetin'.

So I says, "Miss Snapley, I will make you prove your words thro' a lawyer's letter, cos," I says, "I ain't a-goin' to set down under it; cos," I says, "talk of women's rights. Why," I says, "my wrongs would fill a Act of Parlyment, and wherefore? only because I've got on in the world, and as to bein' a figger, a accident may 'appen to any one agin a lamp-post bein' fresh painted, and not a-thinkin' it worth while to go in and change, as shall be a-goin' 'ome in a minit or two, as Mrs. Padwick would bring me in 'ere for a cup of tea."

Says Miss Snapley, "The idea of a woman at your age a-runnin' agin a lamp-post, as I suppose you didn't see, thro' a-'oldin' your 'ead so 'igh."

So I says, "It were a axidence as might 'ave ended fatal under a wheel, as Mrs. Padwick well knows; but," I says, "I am not a-goin' to be insulted over it by no one, as to wot you says about 'oldin' of my 'ead up, it's only a duty."

So I walks out of the room, and puts on my bonnet, and goes off 'ome, a-resolvin' as I'd go to see Brown's lawyer, as is Mr. Smoothly, the fust thing in the mornin', as nice a gentleman as ever spoke.

I didn't 'ave a good night, no doubt thro' the tea, but went fust thing to Mr. Smoothly, but findin' 'im out, 'ad to speak to his managin' clerk, as is a old ass.

He says to me, "Clear case of libel; says as you was a little on, does she? I'll write to 'er this werry day."

I says, "And please tell 'er to keep a civil tung in 'er lips when speakin' of a lady over a tea table, and, as she's so fond of women's rights, she shall 'ave 'em, and so will I, if I goes to Queen Wictoria on my bended knees to ask 'em."

Well, in course, I reg'lar expected as they'd settle Miss Snapley with that lawyer's letter, but, bless you, she never took no notice on it, not even sendin' a line to say as she'd got it, as were not actin' the lady, I considers, as she did ought to be, tho' 'er father were in the ile and colour line close agin the Mash gate.

So there were a end of that, as cost me three-and-sixpence for nothink, besides the bus both ways, as is why I 'ates law. So I'm sure, talk of women's rights, there did somethink ought to be done for to preserve any one's character, as might be took away like your breath by any calermel, as parties chooses for to spread about.

That's why I do not 'old with law, and always considers it best for to settle things with a friendly sperrit out of court; but as to women's rights, wotever are they? 'cos to read the papers, you'd think as they was only made for men to abuse and murder, and I fully espects as we shall live to see the time when there'll be a reward for the man as 'ave ill-used and killed the most women.

For I see by the papers, as a man may take and kill his wife by shovin' of 'er under a brewer's dray, and the Judge were quite perlite to 'im on bein' so 'umane as to pick 'er up and 'elp take 'er to the 'ospital, where she died; and gives 'im three months for it, and that only, cos he'd tried to shove 'er under a omnibus, as didn't go over 'er.

So I says to Mrs. Bottin as come in to 'elp me with puttin' up my new bed, as is a flowery chintz, I says, "Wot's your opinion of women's rights?"

As I'm sure she did ought to know, thro' 'avin' 'ad three 'usbands 'erself, and two on 'em in the boot and shoe line, as the last one took to drinkin'

and nearly killed 'er with a boot tree, and then throwed 'imself out of the second floor back, and fell thro' a sky-light into a dyer's wat next door, as saved 'is life, but ricked 'is neck that wiolent, as he couldn't never swaller nothink agin without splutterin', as made 'im give up drink, but didn't live only three weeks, and never able to set up; so 'ad to take in plain needlework, poor soul! arter ridin' in 'er own shay, and was werry clever at the upholstery line, as ain't sich close work as shoe bindin', tho' a slow worker at eighteenpence a day and 'er meals.

Well, she said she'd never 'ad no rights, poor old soul, but told me over 'er work wot she'd 'ad to put up with in 'er time in the way of wrongs, as was dreadful to listen to, tho' they was all three chapel goers and steady men, but two on 'em with tempers like lucifers to go off; and the third, 'im as throwed 'isself out the winder, all right when sober, as were only when he were asleep, and sold the werry bed from under 'er the week before, and 'is last act were to beat 'er like a stock-fish, as the sayin' is.

I don't think as ever in my born days I ever did 'ear sich a case as 'er stepdorter by the fust 'usband, as was took to the 'ospital over and over agin by 'is ill-usage, and 'im bound over to keep the peace, thro' the black eyes as he'd give 'er if he didn't like 'is dinner, and would come 'ome intosticated to tea

and drag 'er out of bed by the 'air of 'er 'ead, and stomped on 'er, arter throwin' the babby, as was only three weeks old, out of the winder, as it's a mercy were the ground-floor, and fell into a wheel-barrer of grains as was a-standin' there for the pigs, as never woke it, poor little dear!

But it's no use a-ritin', nor yet a-talkin', cos it's the women's faults as much as the men's nine times out of ten, as is oftentimes all the wuss for licker together.

As to interferin', you don't ketch me a-doin' of it, as 'ave suffered enuf, tho' not as bad as poor old Polly Wood, as good-natured a creetur as ever lived, and only stepped into them Rordin's room in the middle of a row atween 'em, jest to make peace, and got a pint pot and a flat-iron jest atween 'er eyes as soon as she put 'er 'ead in at the door, and was took to the 'ospital on a short ladder, and never spoke for over three days, and then wouldn't persecute the feller, cos 'is wife come a-snivellin' to 'er bed-side a-askin' of 'er not in the 'ospital, as is not mussy, but downright foolishness, I considers, a-lettin' a feller go loose as ain't no better than a wild beast for savidgeness.

But pre'aps wouldn't 'ave got 'im punished if the judge should 'appen to 'ave 'ad a few words with 'is good lady that very mornin' over breakfast, as will sometimes 'appen with the best of

'usbands, thro' 'er a-wantin' to do somethink as he don't like.

Cos the judge he might think to 'isself, if my wife can aggrawate me, as am too good a judge to raise my 'and agin a fieldmale, wotever she may be, why, in course a coster as ain't got that self-respect for 'isself he would give a blow where I should 'esitate over a hoath, tho' spoke in 'aste.

So I says it's them things as shows the use of a jury, cos it ain't likely as twelve men would all 'ave 'ad rows with their wives the same day, and wouldn't recommend 'im to mussy.

But, law! when you comes to think, why there ain't no one free from drink if once they gives into it, for there were that perlice as were that rude to me Thanksgivin' Day, thro' me a-correctin' 'im for 'ittin' parties about and tearin' their clothes for nothink, as were the cause of me a-fallin' off that there truck as I'd paid a shillin' to stand on, so as Queen Wictoria might 'ave a good look at me in passin', a-knowin' as she'd be pleased for to see me, as give a reg'lar bend with 'er royal 'ead in passin', when I waved my umbreller that wiolent as 'it a party with 'is 'at on pretty sharp in comin' down on 'is nose, as give me a wiolent shove, a-thinkin' as I'd struck 'im for not a-takin' of 'is 'at off.

Well, that werry perlice, I've 'eard since, were found drunk and disorderly 'isself afore the night

were over, and got dismissed the force next mornin', as were a judgment on 'im for darin' to say as I were the wuss for wot I'd took, as were a base false'ood, as I can get friends for to speak to me bein' as sober as any judge—parties as I were along with as is strict teetotalers, as is 'abits I 'olds with on them days when anythink is a-goin' on public like, and parties apt to make too free.

As is why I thinks the Merrykins is right to shet up all the drinkin' bars when there's a 'lection or anythink like that as is apt to lead you on, and ends in a riot, with your 'ead broke; and I'm sure my 'ead was splittin' the next mornin' arter Thanksgivin' Day, as was all that crowdin' and squeezin' as I got, as in course sends the blood to the 'ead that wiolent as must go somewheres, when drove out of your werry brains by that pressure, as I'm sure I couldn't draw my breath free, let alone my blood.

But as I were a-sayin', there ain't no woman as ever did know right from wrong as 'll stick up more for right than me, thro' 'avin' my time on my 'ands; for it's a mussy as my family's growed up, and Brown so much took up with all them ingins as not to care wot I do nowadays.

Not as my time is reg'lar filled up with them politics, so as to go a-neglectin' of my duties, as I'm sure I never did understand, and never shall; and

that's why, as I says to Mrs. Snitch, as is a reg'lar Red Republic, "Wotever is the use of askin' me about things like the Park Lane Murder, as you never can say as Lady Twist had no 'and in, tho' almost next-door naybours; but all as I can say is, whyever did that old Frenchwoman take a wile Communist into 'er 'ouse without a character? Though pre'aps she 'ad 'er reasons, cos the less said about character with them parties the better."

All that part is gettin' to be a reg'lar bye-street now, as they've been and took the thoroughfare up 'Amilton Place, as did used to be thought private property, when old Lord Eldin lived at the corner, as I've 'eard my dear mother talk on scores of times, thro' a-doin' of their washin', as only wore two shirts a-week 'isself, and 'is good lady (as were a runaway match) bein' that mean as she begrudged the table-linen, and wouldn't 'ave the drorin'-room fire lighted, and 'adn't nothink but liver and bacon for dinner when the Prince Regent, as were King George the Fourth, dropped in accidental to pot-luck, as the sayin' is, and went down on 'is knees in the House of Lords a-bustin' into tears, and prayin' as they wouldn't pass the Reform Bill, as is why they broke the Dook of Wellin'ton's winders, as 'ad iron shetters put up, and were called "The Iron Dook" ever after.

But, law! it's all fancy arter all, for the Dook

lived to see as the Reform Bill didn't make no difference, but there was jest the same jobbery and robbery a-goin' on all round as afore, only it got into more 'ands, as is wot they means by all them reformations, as is jest this, that a few parties 'as got 'old of a good thing, and is a-featherin' of their nests well over it. Then them as is outsiders, and can't get a finger in the pie, they're naturally werry savidge, and kicks up a row, till the others lets them into the swindle, and shares the swag with 'em, and then you don't 'ear no more about reforms.

It's enuf to make a cat larf to 'ear about them patriots, only I'm sure our cat ain't sich a fool as to trouble 'er 'ead about sich rubbish. But, when Brown reads to me about these 'ere gents as goes on a-speechifyin' all about the country's good, I always says, "Law, Brown, wot fools them poor country people must be to believe as them fellows cares about their good; and a deal of trouble they'd any on 'em take if they didn't get a lot for their pains."

But as I were a-sayin', as to Women's Rights, I werry well knows wot they are, and no one better, as is to be good wives, and good mothers, good nusses, good naybours, clean, 'onest, and sober; and, as long as they sticks to that, they'll 'ave all their rights.

In course there's a lot of fancy old maids as ain't

got nothink else to do, as must be a-pokin' in their noses where they ain't wanted; and, when they're tired of pickin' people's characters to pieces, some takes to politics, and others tries to turn doctors; and, in course, it don't matter what a old dried-up mummy takes to at past forty, when 'er blushin' days is over. But, afore that time, I tells women they'd better be a-lookin' out for 'usbands, and, when they've got 'em, do their dooty by 'em.

I didn't see Miss Snapley not for months, and then 'eard as she wanted to make friends with me, and said to Mrs. Padwick as she were ready to withdraw the licker, if I'd look over the rest.

So I says to Mrs. Padwick, I says, "I'm not one to bear no mallis, partickler as she's a relation of yourn; so let's shake 'ands."

She says, "Martha, you are not a bad sort; but," she says, "you really must not go so much in crowds, for everythink flies to your 'ead."

"Well," I says, "that is my constitution, as were the same from a gal; for never shall I forget the night as I 'ad once a-sleepin' at a friend's 'ouse, as were a-goin' to get up early for to see the Dook of York's funeral go by, as died off Piccadilly, and were took to Winsor to be berried in state, as passed in front of friends as kep' a milk-shop close agin the Knightsbridge Barricks, and 'ad my 'air put in papers all over my 'ead, and couldn't get a

wink of sleep thro' the pain, as curled up into cork-screws in the mornin', and every one said must be nat'ral."

As when I went 'ome my dear mother said were only waste of time, tho' 'ighly becomin' all down your back didn't suit clear-starchin', as was all shaved off after the scarlet fever, and never come agin, and 'ad to take to fronts afore I were thirty, as I've stuck to ever since, tho' never could wear that mow'air, as looks that formal as no one would take for nat'ral 'air.

I 'adn't no time to think nothing about Women's Rights all the winter, for wot with the Tichbung Case, the Allyblammer Claims, and one thing and the other, my 'ead were that confused that I didn't 'ardly know wot to think; and when Mrs. Wallerby says to me, all of a suddin, "Well, Mrs. Brown, what do you think of the Counter Case?" I says, "In my opinion, it's one as there's no gettin' over in a 'urry, as nat'rally takes in the Early Closin', as were quite put out by it last week thro' a-wantin' to match a bit of silk for my gal Eliza to fresh line the baby's hood, to wear with 'is cloak to be christened in, as 'ad been 'is two little sisters' afore, as 'ad dribbled all the colour out naturally, and were to take place the next Sunday; I could 'ave got it down to 'er by seven o'clock Saturday evenin', and not a 'our's work, thro' 'er 'usband

bein' up for the day, Saturday, and a-leavin' by the five o'clock espress, and never come near me nor mentioned the silk till past one."

So I says, "There's only one place to go to for it, as is where it were bought, thro' bein' my own present to 'er fust; but," I says, "I must 'ave a mouthful, as I'm sure you must want;" as were on the table, bein' a bit of cold lamb, as I'm sure we weren't a quarter of a 'our over, and then 'ad a cab thro' me a-'avin' a misgivin' as the shop closed at two; and so it turned out, for when we got there, as was only a quarter past, and every shutter up jest like Sunday, as put me out dreadful.

But that wasn't arf so bad as me a-goin' with poor Mrs. Spivens to get her Christmas things Christmas eve, as 'er 'usband is a somethink in the Civil Service, and 'ad a ticket for to get all as she wanted at them stores as they calls copperated, thro' the prices bein' that low; and when we got there, tho' it were Christmas eve, and not four in the arternoon, the dratted place were shet up as close as wax.

Poor soul! she couldn't get out earlier, thro' not a-gettin' 'er father's letter till the arternoon post, as 'ad sent 'er five pounds, tho' not good friends; as she 'ad to give two onto the landlord to keep 'im quiet, with shoes for the children and

odds and ends, didn't leave her more than eighteen shillins' to lay out.

It's true as she 'ad got the meat and wegetables in out of wot 'er 'usband give 'er, as is a steady man; but, law! wotever is eighty pound a year to keep seven on 'em, tho' she does make a trifle a-cuttin' papers for fire-stoves and other fancy things, as there ain't much sale for at Christmas time.

So that's why I don't 'old with the Early Closin', nor yet the Wolunteers, as I considers sojerin' jest the same as a-goin' into the Church, as did ought to be took up serous, or else let alone; and I'm sure the numbers as I've knowed ruined by jinin' the militier; why, they're untold, as seems to unsettle a young man by makin' 'im fancy as he's somebody in regimentals, when we all knows as he's nobody all the while.

Miss Snapley she were makin' a reg'lar fuss over me the next time as we did meet, and full of 'er compliments about me bein' that clear-'eaded as everybody wanted my opinion; and she'd 'eard say as when there was Cabinet Councils as Queen Wictoria 'erself always said, "What have Mrs. Brown said on this 'ere pint?"

So I says to 'er, "It ain't for me to contradict nothink; but," I says, "who told you?" for I could see she were a-jeerin'.

She says as a party as 'ad see it in print ad told 'er.

"Ah!" I says, "that may be only the depth of them Ministers, as feels they're in a mess over these 'ere Allyblammer Claims, and to shove it off their own shoulders, will try to get out of it by a sayin' as it were me as caused all the trouble."

Says Mrs. Wallerby to me, "I will say, Mrs. Brown, as I never did see such a woman as you are to illude anythink. Why," she says, "I asks you jest now your opinion over the Counter Case, and if you didn't go off upon the Early Closin'."

"Well," I says, "and werry nat'ral I should, thro' 'avin' of the shop runnin' in my 'ead; not as I 'olds with them counter-skippers a-comin' a-waultin' over 'em the same as one on 'em did one day, jest as I were a-walkin' up a shop along with Miss Pelkinton, and 'ad got about arf-way up, when I turns round to pint out to 'er a piece of stuff on the counter as a lady were a-buyin' of, a-sayin' that were the colour as I liked.

It's lucky as I 'ad turned my back, for I'm sure if that young feller's 'igh-lows 'ad ketched me in the chest they'd 'ave knocked the breath out of my body; as it were, they took me just under my left arm, as I'm sure must 'ave 'ad iron tips to 'em, for they come with that force as sent me for'ard on to a 'eap of things, as was fancy goods laid out all up

the middle of the shop for show, as I shot in among and sent the 'ole lot flyin' all about the place, and upset two old ladies as was a-settin' at the oppersite counter a-pickin' out ribbins on two igh stools.

I think I did more damidge a-gettin' up than in fallin', for I 'eard glass bottles a-crunchin' under me, and when I got on my feet, a party comes up and says "Step this way;" as I nat'rally thought were a-goin' to offer me refreshments or somethink civil; and you might 'ave knocked me down with a puff of hair when the feller says, "I've sent for a policeman."

I says, "Well," I says, "you didn't ought to be too 'ard, for I do believe as it were a accident."

He says, "We've 'ad too much of this sort of thing goin' on lately; you're the third within a fortnight as 'ave tried it on."

I says, "I 'aven't been a tryin' nothink on, as only come to buy a dress, without a-thinkin' of 'avin' it made up here; in fact, 'ave 'arf promised the party as is with me the job."

He says, "She's no doubt one of the gang."

I says, "Who are you a-callin' a gang." I says, "I won't set 'ere to be insulted, as a glass of sherry wine were the werry least you might 'ave offered any one arter sich a outrage as I feels all down my back now."

So, just then, in came a bustlin' sort of feller, in all chains and wesket, and says, "Wot's all this?"

"Oh!" I says, "now, preaps, you 'ave got some sense in your 'ead, and may esplain things."

He didn't take no notice of me, but says to the other, "What do you want with the perliceman?"

Says the feller, "Why, to give this old woman in charge. She's one of a gang of shoplifters, as comes into the shop, a-pretendin' to fall down, knocks over the things, and in the confusion her 'complices steals lots of fancy articles."

My breath were that took away, as anser I couldn't not for ever so long, and when I come more to myself, I says to 'im with the chains, "I'm glad as you're witness, and now let me out."

Says the feller as brought me in, "Not so fast; you give some account of yourself."

I says, "My name is Martha Brown, and," I says, "I'm a-goin' straight to my lawyer, as shall take the law agin you, not only for slander, but backbitin' too, as I can show the marks of that boy's boots in my ribs, as come over the counter with a flyin' leap, 'eels fust, and done all the mischief."

So I says, "Let me pass; and if ever you dares to breathe a word agin me, I'll show you up."

Says the party with the chains, "Oh! Mrs. Brown, please step in to my private room, for I

wouldn't 'ave no slight offered to you not for worlds."

I says, "There were a lady with me, as I must look arter."

Says the man, as 'ad spoke fust, "She went out of the shop the moment you fell, as made us all think as it were a plant."

I says, "Wot 'ave you lost? 'cos I'll make it good."

"Well," says the other with the chains, as were the owner, "we'll say nothink about it, but do step in here;" and throws open a door into a beautiful furnished room, with a easy-chair like a down bed for to set on, with a glass of brown sherry and a biscuit.

So he says to me, "I hope, Mrs. Brown, as this won't lead to no misunderstandin' atween us, as will be glad of a good word from you."

I says, "You'll escuse me, but I never recommends nothink nor nobody, for you never knows wot you're a-doin', and tho', if I was to say where I got my things, it would be a little fortun to any shop, thro' me bein' sich a figger to look at when dressed, as parties 'as said to me, often and often, 'Mrs. Brown, mum, you'd look well, if nothink on but a rag,' and my life's wore out thro' friends a-askin' for my pattens, so I never will recommend nobody, cos there's a mean lot about, as is capable

of sayin' as I'm paid to advertise shops, as I'll defy 'em to prove their words.

"I'm sure when I did recommend Mrs. Tolbin to where I got my welvet cape, she only turned on me, and said she were reg'lar swindled with a cotton as wasn't even lined through with silk, so no recommendin' for me, as I'm sure I never gets no thanks, nor you neither for your pains, but, in a general way, only abuse both sides, as is 'ard to bear when innercent," and up I gets.

He says, "Pray walk back into the shop and make your purchases."

I says, "Not to-day, as am that upset as I couldn't face all them young fellers a-grinnin', not as I'm angry with 'em, for I couldn't 'elp larfin' myself."

So out I come, and do think as I'm one for to speak about Counter Claims, for of all the oudacious things as ever did appen to a lady a-shoppin', I think that beats 'em.

But that wasn't nothink to Miss Pelkinton's impidence, as went off to Mrs. Elwart, as lived jest oppersite to me then, and 'ated the ground as I walked on, and tells 'er as I'd been at my old games and took to the station-'ouse on a stretcher, and all because I said as I didn't think I could give 'er my dress to make, as was words spoke in 'aste, and only for to save 'er disappointment if I'd 'ave 'appened

to 'ave see one of them made-up suits as would 'ave fitted me, as she can't a-bear the sight on, and says as they're the ruin of the dressmaking trade.

Says Miss Snapley a-chimin' in, as is 'er ways, "I don't think, Mrs. Brown, as you sees clearly Mrs. Wallerby's pint in this Counter Case."

I says, "You'll escuse me, but any one must be a fool as don't know wot a Counter Case is, partickler any one as 'ave done the shoppin' I 'ave."

"Yes," says Mrs. Wallerby, "but this is the Counter Case agin the Allyblammer Claims."

I says, "That don't alter the case, for tho' the Merrykins do call linen-drapers dry goods, and a shop a store, yet a counter is a counter all the world over, as even them Turks as sit cross-legged in them bazaars, as ain't no more like Soho Square than I am to Lord Nelson's Column, why, even them degraded beasts knows what a counter is."

"Oh," says Mrs. Padwick, a-comin' in with the tea ready made, and a thing as she calls a cosey over the teapot for to keep it 'ot, as is Berlin-work a young lady done for 'er, but not a thing as I should use, tho' werry good for Mrs. Hooley as kep' the "Blue Pig and Whistle" over agin Low Leighton, as always 'ad a somethink to throw over the teapot as kep' the warmth in, thro' bein' obliged to jump up from 'er tea that frequent with

customers a-comin' in for a glass as you can't get rid on without a few words.

So says Mrs. Padwick, a-pourin' out the tea, "Politics agin! Oh! if this 'ere goes on much more I shall emigrate."

I says, "It were not politics, but wot is more interestin' all the world over, as is ladies' dress as we was a-talkin' over."

"No," says Miss Snapley, "the Allyblammer question.

I says, "Wotever's that got to do with a Counter Case? but," I says, "speakin' of that, are any of you ladies a-goin' to jine the Fieldmale Dress Reform Society, as a lady called on me about as I hadn't no time to attend to?"

Says Mrs. Wallerby, "I've 'eard speak on it, as'll be a very good thing if carried out."

I says, "No doubt; but who's a-goin' to do it?"

Miss Snapley says, "I am."

"Oh," I says, "indeed!" and I thinks to myself, "If any one takes up your way of dress, they won't cut much of a figger;" but didn't make no remark.

Says Mrs. Wallerby, "There'd be an end to trade if every one wore nothink but a black parrymatter with a tippet of the same, and a bonnet and wail to match, summer and winter."

"Yes," I says, "that would be a-goin' back to the anshent order of Foresters, as wore nothink but leaves, the same as the Druids, as didn't wear no clothes at all, but lived in 'oller trees, and only put their 'eads out of a 'ole in the trunks, and lived on the acorns as fell off 'em into their mouths, as was a easy way of gettin' your bread, but was sing'ler characters, as didn't mind the weather, leastways if you may judge by one of their churches, as is standin' now down near Salisbury, as they calls Stonehinge, without neither roof nor yet walls, as must 'ave been a fearful drafty place to set in and 'ear a sermon of a wet Sunday, afore umbrellers was inwented or waterproofs 'eard on, as I well remembers a-comin' in myself, and my own grandmother, when a gal, 'eard a man larfed at for carryin' of a umbreller in the 'Aymarket, as wasn't inwented in Queen Lizzybeth's time, or else she wouldn't never 'ave borrered that young feller's cloak for to save 'er from the wet, as made 'is fortune, tho', like the rest of her court beauties, he were a bad lot; and if I was Queen Wictoria I wouldn't 'ave them 'ussies of King Charles's 'angin' about my pallis, as was as bad as a 'eathen Turk with them columbines under 'is lawful wife's nose.

"And that's wot I says about fieldmale dress, and Women's Rights, and all the rest on it; a decent woman's a decent woman all the world

over, and if women 'as got done out of their rights, it's in general their own faults, and I don't pity 'em a bit."

Says Miss Snapley, "We did ought to set 'em a esample."

"Well," I says, "I suppose you 'ave; and I'm sure no one can't say as ever I forgot my sect, as is the only way to make a man respect you, the same as I told Maria Grimbly when she come over to see me with a baby in 'er arms as she said the father on 'ad lewanted, tho' a-thinkin' 'erself married to 'im lawful in Whitechapel Church, and found out three months arter as he were a married man."

So I says, "Whyever couldn't you 'ave found it out three months afore, as couldn't 'ave had no respect for you, or wouldn't have treated you like that."

She says, "He's a wile deceiver as ever spoke to any one as he didn't know a-settin' on a bench close agin Greenwich 'Ospital with my own sister-in-law, and asked us to tea, as I didn't want to accept; and that's 'ow I knew 'im fust, as come reg'lar and paid his 'dresses to me of a Sunday arternoon, so I thought it were all square."

"Now," I says, "Maria, I'll settle that there in a brace of shakes, as the sayin' is. Wotever could you or your sister-in-law espect from a promiscous party like that, as I'm sure I might set on

a bench in front of Greenwich 'Ospital for a year of Sundays, and no journeyman painter and glazier ever dare talk to me beyond, preaps, passin' a remark on the weather, as I don't in gen'ral notice, tho' in course that is public property, and, like a deal of other public property, gets abused shameful."

Says Mrs. Padwick, "But you know werry well, Martha, as women is werry often mere slaves."

"Yes," I says, "and whose fault but their own? tho' in course I am not illudin' to them poor negro black gals, nor yet them poor 'arf-denuded creeturs as them 'eathen Turks keeps locked up in them 'areems, as they calls 'em; but," I says, "it makes my blood bile to 'ear of sich fools as that Mrs. Spilsby, as lets that feller as is a fiddler or somethink knock 'er about, and tear her weddin'-ring off to get licker with, and smashed nearly all the things in the room, as wasn't 'ern, but her poor mother's, as took 'em into 'er lodgin's out of charity when the landlord turned 'em into the street, as 'adn't paid no rent for over nine months, as comes 'ard with furnished apartments; and when the old lady give 'im in charge, and 'ad 'im locked up, if 'is wife didn't say as her ma 'ad been too 'ard on Charles, and went back to live with 'im and 'is blackguard companions, as no decent woman didn't ought to 'ave been seen with, let alone all live in one room."

Says Miss Snapley, "She did ought to 'ave reasoned with 'im, and pinted out the folly of such ways."

"Well," I says, "you better go to 'im, and then can try your 'and at it if you like, for he's in the infirmary now for the third time with delirus trimlins, as is a complaint if I'd my way, as I'd punish parties for 'avin', jest the same as when they're took up for tryin' to 'ang or drown their-selves."

Says Mrs. Wallerby, "A wife did ought to look over a 'usbands failin's."

I says, "Yes, in course 'is failin' is nothink; but she needn't look over 'is bein' everlastin' in licker, give 'im fried tripe and butter-toast for breakfast in bed, nor yet rob 'er parents to get 'im drink, nor pawn the boots off 'er feet cos he fancies dog's-nose afore he's arf awake in the mornin'. No," I says, "it's all nasty, wile, wicious ways, and depend on it as it's six of one and 'arf a dozen of the other with most women. So they don't get no pity from me."

"Well," says Miss Snapley, "it's our mission to teach man better."

"Well," I says, "there certingly is Missions enuf, and I know the City Mission 'as been a-tryin' a long while to do it, and ain't succeeded any more than them Bible Women and them other parties as tries to conwert the Jews down Bethnal Green; and

I'm sure if I was a Jew I should say as wot kep me from bein' a Christshun was as I didn't see no Christshuns as was a bit better than Jews in their ways, nor yet as good 'usbands and fathers werry often."

Not as I can abear some of their dishes, and everythink a deal too greasy and sweet for me; and as to them pickled cowcumbers as they're so partial to, they're werry flabby and tasteless, and a shockin' colour for pickles; and old clothes is things I can't abear about the place, so shouldn't never do for the Jews' persuashun myself. But as to conwertin' 'em, it's 'ard work for to wean any one from things as they've been brought up to from infancy; as many on 'em will cling to old clothes and is proud on, and considers theirselves descended from Nebbycunezzer, as were turned out to grass, as shows as pride shall 'ave a fall, as the sayin' is.

But talk of pride, I'm sure no Jew couldn't be prouder than Mrs. Macgilpin, as were of the Scotch persuashun, and told me 'erself as 'er grandfather were 'anged, and she gloried in it, to save bonnie Scotland, as is a country no Jew can't live in; and that's the reason, I've 'eard say, as the Irish always 'as pigs in the place for to keep Jews out, as is werry narrer-minded, I considers, and takin' a mean adwantage of any one's religion, as didn't ought to be throwed in any one's face.

Not as I considers it were 'ansome condict on the part of young Cohen, as lodged along with Miss Stellins, and certingly lovely eyes and 'air tho feller 'ad, tho' she were old enuf to be 'is mother, and reg'lar to keep company with 'er for over a year, and drinkin' tea three times a week, and then tell to 'er face, when she owed over nine pounds for srub for 'im, as he never could marry 'er unless she'd go over to Jerusalem and 'ave 'er 'ead shaved fust, or somewheres about them parts, and be pretty nigh killed by the Jew women over there, a-purifyin' 'er, as would scald 'er to death in bilin' water, and make 'er live on the top of the 'ouse for a month with nothink on but a reed mat and rice and water, and then never consider 'er one of 'em.

So she said as she'd think over it, but he never give 'er the chance, but walked into 'er little shop as bold as brass within the week, as were in the stuff-bird line, close agin the Ingy 'Ouse, with 'is bride on 'is arm, and a reg'lar Jew too, as knocked poor old Miss Stellins reg'lar over, and the landlord sold 'er up within the month, and when last I 'eard on 'er were in Limus Workus, as were 'er parish thro' bein' born in the Outward bound docks, and 'er mother a arf cast and 'er father a super cargo, as is preaps the reason as she took to the Jews thro' bein' used to the poll parrot trade, as some on 'em talks and uses bad words jest like Christshuns.

Not as I've got anythink to say agin the Jews, as is always werry friendly to me; and I'm sure that time as I went to their place of worship as they calls a sinagog, why, they was perlite to me as could be, a-askin' me for to step up-stairs, as it's their 'abits for to separate the sects, and 'ave got a new one built close agin the Edgeware Road, as is a plain buildin' enuf, and looked werry like the Scotch persuashun inside to me, till they begun the orgin, as is wot the Scotch don't 'old with.

Certingly they did sing werry beautiful, jest like St. Paul's, only it were all done behind a sort of a gratin'.

I didn't think it were at all proper for all them gents to wear their 'ats, but preaps it struck cold to their 'eads, thro' bein' a new place, and a-many on 'em bald and preaps delicate, as is the reason all on 'em 'ad comforters round their necks as looked like towels, leastways, over their shoulders, for fear they should feel a chill.

I never did see a more well-dressed congregation, as there wasn't many on 'em; and as to the part where the ladies did ought to 'ave been, why, it were almost empty; but in course they knows their busyness best, as preaps was all a-bein' good at 'ome, like a-many Christshuns I knows, as never darkens a church doors.

I dare say it's all werry proper for them as

understands it, but thro' not a-knowin' the 'Ebreu, couldn't foller; but it certingly is a werry nice buildin' tho' plain.

I had a good many words with Mrs. Wallerby over it, as went with me, and certingly it is kep beautifully clean, and everyone dressed in their best, as in course is their Sunday best tho' kep of a Saturday.

Well, by the time as we'd done our tea, that werry same evenin', two other parties come in as were not beknown to me, so I says to Mrs. Padwick as I would step round to my place, as I 'aint hardly got settled in, tho' I will say as five nicer rooms on two floors you won't get in a 'urry—three on one floor and two above, as one I shall make a spare room on, with a kitchen as I should be 'appy to live and die in; and 'ave got a young woman as suits me werry well, as is not everybody's money, thro' havin' lost a eye in the small-pox, with one leg shorter than the other, as I don't mind, cos it will keep 'er at 'ome, and no stairs to keep on a-bumpin' up and down constant with 'er clover foot, as they calls it; and I shall make a good servant on 'er in time, I do believe, thro' bein' clean and willin', tho' she can't cook any more than a chimbly sweep; thro' a-askin' me whether she were to skin a fowl, as Brown brought 'ome a couple of beautiful barn-doors in their feathers.

I could 'ave bore all as I've suffered over Women's Rights, but not Miss Snapley's insinuations as said, over tea on the Sunday follerin', with strangers present, "'Ow could you ever bring your mind to go and drink with such characters, Mrs. Brown?"

I says, "Me drink with characters! Who says so?"

"Oh!" she says, "I didn't know, but really you are so werry eccentric in your ways; and arter them draymen there's no tellin' what you will or will not do. But," she says, "I do 'ope if you ever think of comin' to our great meetin', as will be the greatest ever 'eld, you will not meet with any friend on the road."

I were that took a-back at her illudin' to them draymen, as I couldn't anser for 'arf-a-minit, and then I says to 'er, "Miss Snapley, when a party saves my life, and I don't ask 'im wot he'll take, I shall despise myself, though only a drayman, as is flesh and blood arter all; but," I says, "you need not be alarmed about me a-comin' to your meetin', as 'ave been a-talkin' it over with my good gentleman, as don't hold with your ways, and thinks if you got your rights it would be your 'eads shaved and a straight wesket."

I says, "I've 'eard of fieldmales as 'ave wore the unmentionables, but I suppose you wants to wear everything."

She says, a-drorin' of 'erself up, "I don't want

to 'ear none of your coarseness;" and out of the room she flounced.

I were glad she were gone, for I didn't want 'er, but 'ad come to see Mrs. Padwick about bein' werry much took up with our Women's Rights, as we was both a-goin' to attend a meetin' over afore, till Miss Snapley's impidence put me off a-goin'. So in course 'ad to read it all up along with the Permissive Licker Bill, as were throwed over, and would be things a-comin' to a pretty pass if they'd carried it; for tho' it is the law as a man may beat 'is wife with a stick as thick as 'is thumb, they don't want no encouragin' to do it; and besides it ain't every 'usband as 'ave measured 'is thumb as 'olds 'im back; besides, a thin stick may 'urt as much and wuss than a thick one, and a rope's end ain't no joke; so I don't 'old with no laws over them things as is interferin' with private life, as did ought to be sacred; and if a quarrel as ends in blows didn't ought to be done by Act of Parlyment, leastways, that's my views.

So when alone, me and Mrs. Padwick 'ad a good talk.

"But as to Women's Rights," I says, "I must 'ave a good think over it, cos," I says, "if there is a-goin' to be a depitation to Queen Wictoria over it, in course I'll go, and I'm sure if nobody don't pison 'er royal mind agin me, I can tell 'er wot Women's Rights did ought to be, as in course as

their rights; not but wot I think their wrongs is wot did ought to be done away with fust, and then their rights in course would foller."

I'm sure I needn't talk of no other women's rights when I think of my own, as would fill a book any day, and may be a warnin' to others, or I ain't the one to complain, but I will say as them parties in Exeter 'All did ought to 'ave been ashamed of theirselves, a-takin' of me in like that, as is a place as I don't know much on, tho' I 'ave been to afore, but only a meetin' of children, so never give it a thought till a-walkin' down the Strand the other evenin' and stood up for a shower, as come down that suddin as would 'ave drenched me to the skin only but for a-steppin' into that doorway, as I see a good many bills about, and says to myself, "I suppose it's one of them new theayters," and not 'avin' my glasses 'andy, did not read none of the bills, but says to a young man as was a-standin' there, "Wotever is a-goin' on 'ere."

"Oh!" he says, "the great work, always."

I says, "Oh, indeed!" not bein' sure wot great work he meant.

So I says, "Is ladies admitted?" I says.

He says, "In course. Why," he says, "but for them nothink good couldn't be done."

Well, I see as he were a right principled young man, so I says, "Ah! I see you've got a good mother and respects 'er."

He says, "That I do, and a aunt, and two sisters, as is all inside attendin' the meetin."

I says, "You don't mean to say as its 'Women's Rights' as is to be 'ere."

"Yes," he says, "certingly; and all is inwited affectionate."

"Well," I says, "affection is all werry well in families, but I don't 'old with it in no public places, as I'm told is the way as the 'Shakers' goes on, as ain't a-goin' into no place for to be 'ugged by a stranger."

He says, "There ain't no fear of that, but would be welcomed like a sister."

He were a pink-eyed lookin' young feller, with a white face and air to match.

"But," I says, "is this the great meetin'?"

"No," he says, "that'll be the end of the month; this is preliminary."

"Ah!" I says, "I've 'eard on it then," and so I had, for Miss Snapley were a-tellin' Mrs. Padwick they was a-goin' to 'old several.

So I says to that young man, "I should like to go in if not intrudin'."

He says, "No, all are welcome; come old, come young, come all;" and he give me a ticket, and says, "it's at the end of the passage, as would show you the way, but am waitin' for two more aunts;" and away he 'urries afore I could say to 'im that I were obliged to 'im.

I only wish as there was more nephews in the world like 'im, for I'm sure that Alfred Barnes as is growed up now, as is my nephew, and in the business with 'is father, he'd no more think of waitin' in a doorway for me of a wet evenin' than he'd think of flyin' in the hair; but that's 'is mother's doin's, as always did set 'im agin me with 'er back-bitin' ways.

So I says to myself, "I will go in and 'ear all about it, and so be able for to give Miss Snapley a reglar buster by showin' of my knowledge, as is always a-turnin' up 'er nose at my hignorance."

So I walks along them passages, as is werry gloomy, only 'arf lighted thro' the days a-drorin' out, and it's as well to save gas where you can, and come out agin into a street, so I thinks, "Well, arter all, preaps I may as well go 'ome and not go into no strange places alone, as may not understand wot they're a sayin' or doin', as might turn out the 'Shakers' arter all;" so I were a-turnin' away, when a young feller as looked quite different to that other, a deal better lookin', says, "Escuse me, mum, but ain't you a-goin' in?"

"Well," I says, "I ain't made up my mind."

"Oh!" he says, "do; you'll be much interested, and preaps give a 'and at puttin' down this awful practice."

I couldn't 'ardly make out wot he were a-drivin' at, but, a-thinkin' as he might be up to some game,

I says, "I am a-goin' in," as I thought would check 'im.

"Ah!" he says, "that's right, and mind you speak out."

I says "I will."

He says, "Here's a programme," and give me a paper folded up, and then says he, "Let me 'old your redicule and umbreller while you puts on your gloves, as'll finish you up, tho' you looks the lady all over."

So he lays 'old of my umbreller, and I put my bonnet straight and pulled myself together a bit, for I felt all rumpled like. Then I thanks 'im, and he gives me back my things, and I says to 'im, "Which room is it?"

He says, "The lower 'all as is jest along 'ere; the door on the left; and now," he says, "mind as you gives 'em a reglar speech, and let 'em 'ave a bit of your mind, as they werry much stands in need on."

So I walked along the passage with 'im as showed me into a tidy-sized room, tho' not large, where there was some gents on a platform as were a-leadin' some singin', as all were a-jinin' in, as I didn't think much on partickler, 'avin' 'eard so much about the singin' at Exeter 'All, where tens of thousands sings all at once, as I'm sure they never could in that room, as wouldn't 'old 'em, if they was only jest to put their 'eads in like cherrybins.

So when they'd done a-singin', I says, "Bravo," and 'it the floor with my umbreller, as made parties all turn round and look at me, and one or two young 'uns begun a-larfin'.

I didn't say no more in course, but always will give a 'and to encourage parties as is doin' their best to amuse you, cos I thinks it's werry 'ard on 'em poor things to try so 'ard, and then never get a 'and.

I'd been and took a seat near the door, as a party come up to me and says, "Won't you come up 'igher?"

I says, "No, I thank you, thro' not a-bein' prepared with no reglar speech nor nothink, tho' a subjec' as I will say a word on, thro' 'avin' of it next my 'art."

"Ah!" he says, "so has a-many;" and goes up and speaks to the party on the platform.

Well, jest then a party up there begin a-talkin' werry solemn, a-sayin' as they was a little flock, as was oppressed to think of such ways as they were met to put down, and says, "I will now read the statisticks about tobaccer."

I says, "'Ear, 'ear!" and so did a many more, but I didn't pay much attention to wot he was a-sayin', and asks a party next me 'ow long he were a-goin' on about baccer.

She says, "Oh, he'll speak accordin' to the programme."

I says, "All right," and set a-thinkin' of wot I were a-goin' to say about Women's Rights, when that speaker give the table a crack, and says, "Oh! my sisters, why should you be smothered in your own 'omes? and that," says he, "you shan't be."

I says, "Of course not."

"Certingly not," says he; "but are all met 'ere for to claim your rights as wives and mothers, as is dear to every 'uman 'eart."

I says, "'Ear, 'ear!"

Says a stout, red face party next me in a welwet jacket as set tight under 'er arms, "Do keep quiet."

"Well," I says, "so I am; but when I 'ears wot I 'olds with, in course I supports any one as speaks."

"Yes," says the party, "but you're werry much out of order."

"Well," I says, "I 'ave been in the City all day pretty nigh, and wot with the wind and wot with rain I dare say I am a little upset, but only come in here axcidental."

Says the party on the platform, "Mr. Amblin, dear friend, will you keep that aspirant down there quiet?"

I says, "If he's illudin' to me, I'm a instant lamb, and will read the programme, tho' I certingly am aspirant with all this 'eat."

So I took out of my redicule that paper as where

that young man 'ad put it for me, and see a good many picters in it.

I opened that paper as were full of picters, but couldn't make 'em out for want of my glasses, as was at the werry bottom of my redicule.

The stout party says to me a-whisperin', "I do think, mum, if you buys sich disgraceful papers you didn't ought to show 'em 'ere."

"Why," I says, "it's a programme."

"Oh!" she says, "I suppose you're a-goin' to pint a moral out of it."

I says, "That's me all over, as my morals is wot I shouldn't be ashamed to be pinted at, nor yet for Queen Wictoria 'erself to know about."

"Well," she says, "any'ow I wouldn't show it if I was you till your turn comes to speak."

Says the yaller-faced man, a-comin' up all of a 'urry, "My good woman, pray put that wile print out of sight."

Says the stout party, "She's a-goin' to pint out its herrors, and will do good."

Says the yaller-faced man, "The chairman won't never let 'er show it."

Says the stout party, "Oh! won't he? I tell you she shall 'ave 'er turn in due course."

I says, "Bless you I don't want no turn;" so folds up the paper, set back, and shet my eyes, a-listenin'.

"Don't go to sleep," says a party as walked up and down the room. As were another saller yaller-

lookin' man, as smelt werry much of soap, as I see 'ad been and give 'isself a good wash, for there was soapsuds in both of 'is ears.

So I says, "Sleep is the last of my thoughts; but," I says, "wotever is he a-goin' on about up there?" for I couldn't make it out for 'is mumblin'.

"Why," he says, "in course about the subject we're met to discuss."

"Well," I says, "then why ever don't he come to the pint, as it's no use a-beatin' about the bush, as the sayin' is."

"Do be quiet in that corner," says the party on the platform; "any one would think as you'd come to disturb the meetin', for," he says, "we are well aware as there's enemies in our camp, as we 'ope to overthrow; as would disturb that peace without which no deliberation can't proceed."

I'd got my redicule on my arm as weighed 'eavy, and the string were a-cuttin' me; so I takes it off for to lay it on the seat, and jest as I did so I give my umbreller a push, as fell down on the floor, and out on it rolled lots of little paper balls.

Well, them two parties jumps up, 'earin' the noise, and comes to me, and was no sooner on their feet than a lot of bangs was 'eard all over the place esplodin' like fireworks.

Every one jumps up. I give a rush at the door, as only got 'arf on it open, and there I stuck, with parties a-drivin' at me like wild bullocks, and sent

me out into the passage full pelt agin the wall, as nearly knocked the breath out of my body, and 'adn't got my breath when a perliceman ketched 'old on me by my collar that wiolent as I thought my last end were come, thro' bein' strangled, and my eyes a-comin' out of my 'ead.

He give me a pull and a shove back into that room, and drops me on to a bench, a-sayin', "Who see 'er do it?"

There 'ad been a precious deal of screamin' and fightin'; but as they found out as them esploshuns was 'armless, all the parties 'ad set down agin.

So, when the perliceman spoke, a fat, flabby-lookin' man, run to corpilency, with a good many pimples on 'is face, says, "'Eed 'er not, my sisters."

I says, "Who wants you to 'eed me? But," I says, "I'll punish you for this."

Says the perlice, "'Old your row."

Says the fat man, "Lead 'er forth; she is of the earth, earthy."

"Well," I says, "if you'd been a-trapesin' about all day in the mud, you'd be earthy too."

The yaller-faced man and one or two others come up and spoke to the perlice, as took and led me into another room, where a elderly man and another were, as looked at me werry stern, and says, "'Ow could you bring your mind to do sich a outrage? But tell us who are your 'complices, and you shall go?"

I says, "'Complices! Wotever do you mean? Why, I were only a-passin', and stood up for a shower, and a young man at the door begged as I'd walk in, and gave me a ticket and this 'ere paper, a-sayin' it were a programme."

One on 'em took it and opened it, then I puts on my specs, and of all the wulgar pictures as ever I did see there's some of the wulgarest, as I wouldn't 'ave come in to no place where sich goin's on was allowed.

So I says, "You must be a nice gang if this 'ere is your programme wot you're a-goin' on like."

"Oh!" says the stern-lookin' man, "you're 'ardened."

I says, "I'm not."

"Well," he says, "it's a mercy as you have not done murder; and, if justice was done, you'd be locked up all night. But we forgive you, and 'ope it may be a warnin' to you never to act so agin."

I says, "Next time you're up to your larks in 'ere, don't decoy a respectable party into none of your 'aunts."

He says, "Wot do you mean?"

"Why," I says, "wot I say, as were 'ticed in 'ere a-believin' it were Women's Rights, and not sich goin's on as this. But," I says, "I'll 'ave the law on you; and," I says, "give me up my umbreller and redicule, and jest inquire at the door

for a young man as is waitin' for 'is two other aunts, and he'll tell you all about me a-comin' in."

Says the other man, "Pray, go, my good woman."

I says, "You're no gentleman, to call anyone your good woman; but I suppose you knows no better. But," I says, "I am Martha Brown by name; and as to me a-comin' to kick up a riot anywheres, I'd as soon cut my tongue out."

"Then, why did you come to the meetin'?"

I says, "The young man showed me in as give me that programme."

He says, "I see; it's one of those 'artless jests as worldlings delights in, and you've been made a tool on. But, tell me wot meetin' did you come to attend?"

I says, "Women's Rights, in course."

"Oh!" says he; "no such proceedin's wouldn't be allowed in Exeter 'All."

"Law!" I says, "I thought that were the place as everythink in the way of rights was took up."

So he didn't say nothink, but went out of the room with the stern-lookin' party, a-leavin' me alone for a good ten minits, as made me think as they'd gone afore a magistrate, and was a-thinkin' I'd insist on bein' let go 'ome, when, jest as I got up, them two come back.

So I says, "Wot are you a-keepin' me 'ere for?"

Says the stout party with the red nose, "We've been makin' inquiries about you, and find you are

not one of those who make it a 'abit of attendin 'ere."

I says, "Certingly not, and you won't ketch me 'ere no more; so jest let me go, and when next you're a-'oldin' your crack-jaw meetin's, jest pin a paper over the door to say as it's private—no admission."

Says he, "You might 'ave caused death by your folly in a large place."

I says, "It were not my doin's, but some of your own people must 'ave put them things in my umbreller."

Says the stern-lookin' party, "As we are convinced as you are sober, and 'ave reason to believe as you're the wictim of a trick, we shall not detain you."

I says, "You'd better 'adn't, for," I says, "I've got a 'usband as would sell the clothes off 'is back for to punish anyone as dared insult me, and," I says, "as to anyone a-talkin' about me bein' sober, I defy 'em to say it; but," I says, "you'll 'ear more on it, mark my words if you don't." So out of the room I walks, and soon got a bus as took me 'ome, and glad I was to get there, with all its faults, as, I must admit, is a down-draft in all the rooms, and the drains enuf to pison you always afore rain, as I'm a-goin' to 'ave looked into for fear of bein' took ill like the Prince of Wales; not as that were any reason for Miss Snapley to say as I wasn't never 'appy if I wasn't up to my neck in drains.

Not as I'll deny it, for I certingly were that time as I went for to stop along with Mrs. Chillins, as 'ad a old cottage out Turnem Green away, as is all now cleared away by the railroad, and a good thing too, tho' she did cry 'er eyes out when obligated to leave, tho' it were pretty nigh 'er death, and mine too, and as nice a bit of dryin' ground as you'd wish to see.

Not as she were obligated to take in washin', but 'ad give it up entire for many years, and it's well it were no wuss than it turned out.

I'd promised to go and spend the day with 'er in the old place for the last time, as the bus put me down at the corner of the lane.

It made me feel low sperrited a-seein' the place all round dug up for the railway, and 'er old cottage a-standin' alone, as looked werry ramshackle like.

"Law," she says, "whoever would 'ave thought of seein' you, with a 'eavy wash on as is my blankets, and everythink, for the last time," and then begun a whimperin'.

So to cheer 'er up I says, "Law, I likes a wash, and will lend a 'and at 'angin' out."

She says, "You always was a light-'arted creetur, Martha," and dries 'er eyes; "but," she says, "you can't 'ang out as light as you did used to when I fust knowed you, as 'ad a waist as any one might span you round; but," she says, "'ow about

dinner, as is only arf a leg of mutton, as I've sent to the oven."

"Oh!" I says, "wot 'll do for you will do for me, tho' I don't 'old with a leg of mutton bein' cut, nor yet sent to the oven."

So she says, "Why didn't you let me know you was a-comin', and I'd 'ave put you off; but," she says, "pre'aps it's as well you did come, as I'm a-goin' out on the old place Saturday," and 'er eyes begun to fill up with tears, thro' bein' a bit of property as she'd been and bought thro' 'ard work, but certingly got three times as much as she give for it from the railway, as was come close agin the palins at the bottom of the gardin, a escavatin' of it out.

Well, we 'ad dinner at arf past twelve, for the sake of the party as were a-washin', and certingly a good meal tho' it tasted of the oven, for 'er and the gal as 'ad done their dooty since afore six at the washtub, with that poor creetur's babby only five weeks old bein' brought to 'er by a child as couldn't 'ave been nine.

So in course I were glad to 'ave dinner that early for that poor creetur's sake, as is terrible 'ard work.

That arf leg of mutton tasted frightful strong of the wool, and likewise the oven; but the taters was nice and brown, tho' in course I didn't eat none of the puddin' as was under it, as was a treat to that poor child as 'ad brought the babby, and Mrs. Chil-

lins is a kind soul, and said she were to 'ave 'er dinner along with 'er mother.

We set a good bit arter our meal, and then Mrs. Chillins says to me, "You mustn't mind me, Martha, but I must give a eye to the 'angin' out."

"Well," I says, "don't overstrain yourself with a counterpin nor nothink like that; and if there's some light things, and you'll give me a 'andful of pegs, I'll 'ang out myself."

So out we goes into the gardin, as it were a-blowin' werry fresh, and I says, "Take care as the lines is well fastened, or with them 'eavy sheets they'll topple over as sure as eggs is eggs, as the sayin' is."

Mrs. Chillins she were on some low steps a-peggin' of a 'eavy counterpin onto the line, as the woman and gal 'ad jest throwed over. I were a-standin' be'ind, a-'oldin' of Mrs. Chillins steady, thro' the wind bein' that 'igh as it were enuf to sweep you off your legs, when I felt myself a-givin' way, and 'olds onto Mrs. Chillins, as says, "Don't pull at me like that, Martha, as will 'ave me out at the gethers and over into the bargin."

I says, "I'm a-givin' way," and 'adn't 'ardly got the words out when back I went, pullin' Mrs. Chillins onto me, as clung to the clothes-line and counterpin as the woman and the gal 'ung onto at the other side, and over we all went together.

I felt as the earth were a-givin' way under me, and says, "Mussy on us, we're a-goin' thro' the world," and I clutches 'ard onto Mrs. Chillins, as plunged about like a ship in a storm.

It's a mussy they was a-makin' of the railway close at 'and, for them navvies come a-rushin' over, and but for them smothered the lot on us must 'ave been, as were a old cesspool as 'adn't never been filled up proper in the middle of that gardin, as 'ad give way under our feet, and in another minit or two smothered I should 'ave been, like them royal babes in the Tower, but never shall forget, tho' forgive I must, Mrs. Chillins' rudeness, as turned on me and says,

"It's all your doin's, as is that size as you didn't ought never to go nowheres without the Sappers and Miners afore you." As was only 'er bounce, thro' 'avin' a grandson in the Artillery, as always sends them Sappers and Miners fust to see if there's any dangers when they're a-goin' to battle, as shows their prudence in not rushin' 'ead-fust into no pit-falls, as I'm sure I wish I never 'ad into that cess-pool, for tho' I only 'urt my elber with a blow on my chin from the back of Mrs. Chillins' 'ead comin' in contract with it, yet the shock reg'lar upset me; and as Mrs. Chillins kep' on a-sayin' it were all my fault, I were obligated to stand beer all round to them five men, and give the woman some too, and

went 'ome afore tea werry much 'urt at Mrs. Chillins a-tryin' to lay that there old cesspool at my door, as any one might 'ave in their gardin turfed over unbeknown, and 'aven't set eyes on Mrs. Chillins since, as is a relation of Mrs. Padwick's, and 'ad give Miss Snapley 'er wersion of the story; as is all werry well till mine is told, as will put 'er to the blush. Not as she's one as is give to blushin', or she wouldn't never 'ave 'ad the face to set and 'ear the things as she must 'ave in the Diworce Court, as is wot fust brought on words atween us, thro' me a-sayin' as no decent woman wouldn't set in such a place unless drove into it, the same as Mrs. Cleamer's aunt, poor thing, as married a willin' as kicked 'er round 'er own gardin, and tore out enuf of 'er 'air to have stuffed a piller, and then got the lady's-maid to swear as there weren't a bit on it 'er own, and was a-'angin' on the lookin'-glass when he took and throwed it out of winder in a rage at 'er foolishness, as were as bald as a pig, and wore a reg'lar 'aystack of false 'air, with curls a-'angin' down 'er back as the sight on aggrawated 'im for to give it a pull, and all come off in the middle of tea; so never got 'er diworce, tho' a separate maintenance, as kep' 'im at bay with every comfort as six 'undred a-year will bring a single man.

I were a-settin' like the undriven lamb for quiet-

ness over my work, as is a patchwork quilt as I'm a-makin' out of odds and ends of silk as belonged to Brown's old aunt; not as it's a thing as I cares for myself, and shall give it to Mrs. Padwick, cos I considers as a patchwork quilt always looks beggarly, even if made out of Queen Wictoria's own rag-bag, as would, in course, be odds and ends of coronashuns and sich like; but Mrs. Padwick she likes the look on 'em over a bed.

I was jest a-thinkin' as I were a-wastin' a deal of time over it, when in who should come but Mrs. Wallerby and Miss Snapley, as 'adn't never darkened my doors afore.

Well, I were that surprised to see Miss Snapley, as I must say I were cool to 'er; but, law bless you, she's one as won't be put down when she's got 'er pint to gain, so she takes and gives me a kiss as I didn't care much about, tho' a-smellin' of cloves, as were to conceal a onion.

So I says, "Well, ladies, wotever wind blowed you 'ere?"

Says Miss Snapley, "Oh! you naughty Martha Brown, not to espect me, when I've promised to come and see you over and over agin, and am so pleased you've changed your mind."

I didn't say nothink, but only thinks to myself, "I'm sure I never changed my mind about your comin', nor asked you."

Says Mrs. Wallerby, a-chimin' in, "Mrs. Brown, we've come to 'ave a good talk with you."

"Well," I says, "talk away, and we'll 'ave a cup of tea for to wash it down."

Says Miss Snapley, "Oh, you are sich a one for your jokes; but really it's a serous matter as we've got to talk about."

"It is indeed," says Mrs. Wallerby, "leastways to me and Miss Snapley, as bein' the widder and the orfin."

"Well," I says, "as to bein' a widder, that's not your fault; and as to Miss Snapley bein' a orfin', why, that's only the course of natur."

Says Miss Snapley, "There's a many as is my seniores as 'ave their parents livin'."

I says, "Oh, in course there's a many as is reg'lar loosest naturers, as the sayin' is.

Says Mrs. Wallerby, "In course you've 'eard of this 'ere plan to get rid of all the surplis population."

I says, "No, I 'ave not; but if it's anythink about the parsons, I don't want to interfere."

"No," she says, "it's the children."

"Ah," I says, "they in gen'ral 'as large families; but you ain't a-goin' to interfere with that."

Says Miss Snapley, "It's perfectly dreadful to see 'em about the streets, and we've got a plan to put 'em all aboard ship, and send 'em off to Canader."

"Wot," I says, "kindnap the parsons!"

"The parsons!" says she. "No, the children!"

"Well," I says, "let's 'ear more."

She says, "We picks 'em up 'ere and there and everywhere, and sends 'em off from their miserable 'omes to 'ealth and 'appiness over there."

I says, "Oh, indeed! and wot does their parents say to that, as I should consider kidnappin'?"

"Oh!" says Miss Snapley, "we ain't got nothink to do with their parents; they're glad enuf to get rid of em."

I didn't say a word, but kep' a-thinkin' it all over, and gives 'em their teas with a werry nice French roll and German sausage, as they downright enjoyed.

Well, we'd got well through it, when Mrs Wallerby says, "We begins at eight o'clock."

I says, "Do you, indeed!" a-wonderin' wot she were a-goin' to begin, but thinkin' she meant 'er chapel.

She says, "Yes; but 'earin' as you was favourable, me and Miss Snapley thought as we'd drop in and 'ave a talk with you thro' bein' that esperienced as a wife and mother."

Says Miss Snapley, "I quite tremble at the thought."

"Oh," I says, "don't be afeard;" jest a-jokin' with 'er.

"But," she says, "do you advise matrimony?"

"Yes," I says, "I thinks it well as every man should 'ave 'is 'ome, as keeps 'im out of the public-'ouse."

"Yes," says Mrs. Wallerby; "and regardin' of marridge as only a civil right?"

"Ah," I says, "that's wot it did ought to be, for whenever man ain't civil to 'is wife, be sure he don't respect 'er, and ain't a-goin' to keep to 'is love, 'oner, and cherish."

Says Mrs. Wallerby, "That's old-fashioned rubbish."

"Oh, yes," says Miss Snapley, "we're a-goin' to do away with all that goin' to church."

"Ah!" I says, "well, you ain't likely to want that, certingly, not neither on you," I says, a-knowin' as they both belonged to a chapel.

"Yes," says Miss Snapley, "there's a meetin' to-night, and am so glad you're comin', but must be there by seven; but wot do you think of the scheme, Mrs. Brown?"

"Why," I says, "I ain't made up my mind," not knowin' wot she were drivin' at.

Says Miss Snapley, "It seems 'ard as there should be so many single women 'ere, and so many men a-wantin' wives over there."

So I says to myself, "Oh, that's your game, is it?" jest as I remembered two nieces of Lady Wittles' as was sent out to Ingy on spec, as was

past thirty, and both plain, but collared 'usbands for all that, as come 'ome with their livers out of orders, and died at Cheltenham.

I didn't say anythink, thro' a-knowin' as Miss Snapley were that touchy over 'er age, so I only says, "'Ow can I 'elp you?"

Says Mrs. Wallerby, "Only a little neat for me," for the gal 'ad brought in tumblers and cold water arter clearin' away the tea things.

"Well," I says, "I've got nothink to offer you but the unsweetened, as is wot Brown takes with 'is pipe of a night."

So they both had a little neat, Miss Snapley a-sayin' as 'er doctor 'ad ordered it for 'er afore goin' into close places.

"Oh," I says, "it's a fine thing to counteract the drains, as 'ave give the gal a little myself, and also with the painters about, as is wot 'ave drove a many of them artists to drinkin'."

We'd took our teas at four, so it were only jest on the stroke of six when Mrs. Wallerby says to me, "You'll go prepared for to take off your bonnet, won't you, Mrs. Brown?"

I says, "I 'adn't no idea of goin', but didn't know as you ever took off your bonnet in a chapel, as is like the Jews a-wearin' their hats in the sinagog, as is their 'abits."

"Bless you!" says Mrs. Wallerby, "it ain't no

place of worship as we're goin' to, but the great meetin' over Women's Rights as we've come to fetch you to, and 'ave got a lovely seat for you on the platform."

I says, "No, I thank you, I've 'ad quite enuf of them meetin's."

Says Miss Snapley, "I wishes you to come, Mrs. Brown, for," she says, "parties 'as grossly misrepresented you."

I says, "Wot, tried to pass theirselves off for me; that's a old trick, and won't do. Oh, dear, no, my friends knows me too well to be took in like that."

"Oh," says Mrs. Wallerby, "I've 'eard all manner said agin you."

I says, "I'm the hadder all over for sich things, and despises parties as utters sich lies too much even to notice 'em."

"But," I says, "as to this meetin', if only to 'ear wot you've got to say, I don't mind a-comin' if there ain't a-goin' to be no crowdin' nor pushin', nor yet no larks played."

"Oh," says Miss Snapley, "we goes by a cab, and will be let in at a private hentrance, with seats on the platform."

I says, "Not a 'ansom for three, if you please, and mind as the platform's a place as won't give way with any one, as I can get out easy from if tired

or took with one of my fits of spavins, with refreshments 'andy."

Says Mrs. Wallerby, "Trust me for that, as would go nowheres if I couldn't get out easy, as should die if 'emmed in."

I did not much fancy a-goin' without Mrs. Padwick, as were laid up with one of 'er sick 'eadaches, as I fully espected when I see 'er over supper the night afore, as took and made a 'arty meal off picked crab, with bottled ale and 'ot brandy-and-water; as I says to 'er is pison on the top of shellfish, as in course sperrits 'ardens the same as snakes, as you may see any day in the British Museum, 'angin' from the cork, lookin' as fresh as the fust day they was caught, as the natives takes by the tail and draws out of their 'oles over in Ingy, as is a place I never wants to go to, tho' I should like to see.

Not as ever I will believe wot Mrs. Wallerby were a-tellin' me about over tea, as she'd see in the paper, as one of them rulers over there took and blowed fifty or sixty of them native blacks from guns without a trial.

"Ah," I says, "that's the wust of lettin' them 'eathen blacks 'ave power, and it's a mussy as the Inglish 'ave got the country under 'em, so as to stop sich goin's on, and purtect them poor natives from sich willins, as is why they keeps it, cos in course by rights it belongs to the injins."

She says, "Why, bless you, it were two Englishmen as done it."

I says, "I don't believe it."

"Why," she says, "they've both been punished for it."

I says, "And serve 'em right, the willins. Was they 'anged, or blowed from guns?"

She says, "Oh, no. One on 'em was dismissed the service; and the other were moved away somewheres else, where the natives isn't so aggrawatin', so won't try 'is temper."

I says, "Mrs. Wallerby, if you means to tell me as Queen Wictoria will set on 'er throne, and allow sich goin's on, all as that I can say is as I don't believe it, as is wot bloody Queen Mary wouldn't never 'ave suffered, so I'm sure as it ain't reached 'er royal ears yet, as, in course, Scotland is a good way from Injy, and I dare say they've kep' the paper as 'ave got it in out of 'er sight, a-pretendin' as it were lost in the post thro' the direction a-comin' off; as is the way I never got the paper from Canady as my Joe sent me with 'is marridge in it. But," I says, "she shall hear about them goin's on, and so shall every one as I 'as the talkin' to—a couple of wretches. Dismissed, indeed! and I dare say a month's wages and a character give 'em, and call that punishment, cos," I says, "it's werry clear as they was either doin' their dooty, and did ought to be rewarded, or

else a-doin' wrong in killin' them parties, and did ought to be punished."

Miss Snapley says, "Them parties was only Kookers."

"Well," I says, "wot of that, if they was only Kookers? Why," I says, "suppose the Pope 'ad took and killed a 'ole Cook's Escursions, when he caught 'em in Rome, a-pretendin' as they was a-goin' to kick up a riot and overthrow 'im? A nice 'ullerbeloo there'd 'ave been. Not but wot he's too much the gentleman to take that mean adwantage of them as puts theirselves in 'is power."

Well, I see as both them two would take it werry much amiss if I didn't go with 'em to that meetin', so dressed myself werry quiet, and put on a cap under my bonnet as is trimmed with black, thro' slight mournin' as I'm a-wearin' for Mrs. Brinkler's 'arf-sister's child, as she wished me to foller with 'er the week afore last, and took tea with the family arter, as never could 'ave lived thro' bein' a mask of scrofuler, but was wonderful intelligent for nine months and a'arf.

I says, "I don't see why we need 'ave a cab, as the bus will put us down at the iron gates, as leads to 'Andover Square, as were built by George the Fust, as never could abear England, tho' forced to come over to be King for to keep out the Catholics, as they chose cos he didn't believe in nothink 'is-self."

So we started, and got a red Cherrin' Cross jest close by as were nearly my death at the Marble Arch, thro' the conductor a-openin' the door that suddin with me a-settin for'ard, a-leanin' my 'and on the top of the door, and out I shot like lightnin', as I might 'ave been killed but for a costermonger's truck as pulled short round jest at that moment with a load of rhubarb, as ketched me like a feather bed, and no 'arm done but wot tuppence set right, as I give the boy as picked up three or four bunches as fell into the road.

I says to the conductor, "It's no thanks to you as I ain't a-layin' a corpse on the pavin'-stones."

He says, "It's no thanks to you as I ain't smashed with your weight. You've tore one 'inge off the door with your leanin' ways, and it's well as the lamp-post weren't there."

I weren't even shook, so felt as fresh as a four year old when we got out of the bus, and thought we was only a-goin' to walk jest across the square into them rooms as is where King George the Third and Queen Charlotte did used to drink tea and 'ear that old anshent music as I'm so fond on, as was always sacred, and wore black in Lent with the Princesses, and brought in muffins and crumpets from Germany as a reg'lar German baker come over to make, as King George liked, and so did Queen Charlotte, thro' bein' fillin' at the price, and not too much butter, as were one as looked to the main

chance; tho' they do say as the King got werry sick on 'er, and no wonder, as took snuff by the bushel, and were always werry plain, tho' a beautiful 'and and arm, but a fine family, as is all gone now, and 'ad their faults like their naybours, and no doubt, like others as is nameless, was painted blacker than they was.

But we didn't stop at them gates, nor yet go near 'Andover Square at all, but was put down the other side of Oxford Street, and past Regency Circus, and went up one or two streets and into a shabby-lookin' 'ouse.

So I says to Mrs. Wallerby, "This ain't 'Andover Square Rooms."

She says, "No; but that's where we're a-goin' to a'journ to in time."

I says, "Oh! indeed?" and follers 'er along a passidge into a small room as they asked me to wait in while they went to speak to one or two about the meetin' bein' 'eld.

So while a-settin' there I 'ad a misgivin' about that there meetin', for I've tried so many on 'em as 'ave turned out reg'lar failures, and begins to think as if women wants their rights, they'd better work for em at 'ome, and not go a-meetin' over 'em, and should not 'ave went but for wantin' to 'ave a slap at some of them fancy old maids, as is a-talkin' about 'ow to bring up families, as is a thing they knows nothink about, and 'owever should they, as most on

'em only as 'ad the charge of their little sisters, and been werry sharp with slappin' and pinchin' 'em.

I were a-thinkin' of it well over all the way, only got confused thro' a-pitchin' out of the bus, as is enuf to upset any one, partickler with nothink for to restore me, as I felt were a error in me to come out and not bring a little, if it were only red lavender drops, as is a fine thing to take when you feels all overish like, and in a tremble.

But jest as I were a-thinkin' I'd step out and get a somethink, Mrs. Wallerby come back and says, "We're a-waitin' for you now, dear."

I'm sure that woman 'ad been takin' sperrits, for she smelt that strong of cloves and lemon peel, as I knowed well we're only a mask like.

So I follers 'er up a werry dirty flight of stairs with no carpets, and 'arf way up 'em she throws open a door, and found myself on a sort of a platform in a werry dingy room, nearly full of fieldmales.

I'm sure I don't think as ever I were more took a back in my life, as you might 'ave knocked me down with a feather, as the sayin' is, than when a-goin' into that room every one begun a-cheerin' and a-wavin' ankerchers, as I thought at fust was the royal family broke loose, or somethink like that, and when I 'eard parties a-'ollerin' my name.

So I thinks to myself, "It's a-owin' to me 'avin' been reported dead as makes them, as knows me,

glad, but found out arterwards as it were not that, for as a lady, as squeezed my 'and close agin the door, said to me, she says, "Mrs. Brown, you could not die and blush unseen."

"Well," I says, "in course no respectable paper wouldn't put in my death without a-consultin' of me fust, but yet I were afraid as it might alarm them as loves me, and would 'ave contradicted it, only but for Brown, as says, 'You'll only be a-doin' wot them waggerbones wants as spread the report, a-makin' of them somebody, as is a low lot and beneath any one's notice.'"

Well, when that oorayin' was quiet, up jumps a party and says, "We 'as great pleasure in a-receivin' Mrs. Brown 'ere to-night, as is a conwert to our ways."

I says, "Wotever does she mean," but couldn't say nothink, cos a party begun a-readin' a letter from one of the bishops, a-sayin' he were sorry as he could not take the chair, but sent 'is best wishes.

Well, some 'issed at that, and then there was other letters read polergizin', and they seemed reglar nonplushed about that chair, till at last Miss Snapley she gets up with a deal of smiles, and purposes as Mrs. Brown do take the chair.

It wasn't no use me a-sayin' nothink agin it thro' the row as they all kicked up, and afore I knowed where I was, I were reglar forced into it.

I never did feel more out of my helefant, as the sayin is, than in that chair, as were a harm and a tight fit, thro' not a-knowin' wot I were to say or wot to do; so I says, "You will escuse me, ladies, but wot to do in this chair I don't know no more than the child unborn."

Says a party, "Mrs. Brown will give us 'er views on 'Women's Rights.'"

I says, "That I will with pleasure; for," I says, "if ever there was a subjec' as I'm up in it's them as 'ave studied women," I says, "from Queen Wictoria, as there is five years atween us; and tho' not old enuf to be 'er mother, might be a elder sister, tho' I have 'eard say as she is only a 'arf sister by the mother's side as is of the German persuasion, and none the wuss for that if you takes them German wars into consideration, as it's well to 'ave a friend at Court.

"Not as I'm afraid of no Prooshuns myself, nor yet Queen Wictoria neither, as we all knows, cos in course if they was to give us any of their sauce she'd take and send for 'er married dorter and the children over here, and in course if the 'usband liked to come he'd be welcome, and be made a ranger or somethink, but we shouldn't stand none of that old Lord Chancellor Beastmark's rubbish, as may be a big wig, as the sayin' is, over there among Germans, but would 'ave to sing werry small 'ere."

So I says, "'Women's Rights' for ever." "Hooray and bravo," says every one.

"But," I says, a-lookin' round, "it may seem werry bold in me to be a-steppin' forard like this, when there's younger and more beautifuller all around me," as made Miss Snapley give a simper, a-thinkin' I were illudin' to 'er nose, as is as fiery as a dart, as the sayin' is, and a wisp of 'air brushed up a-one side to 'ide a bald patch as she've got behind 'er left ear, as she says 'er little nephew tore out in 'is play; but, in my opinion, never got over the ringworm; tho' I didn't like to 'urt 'er feelin's by illudin' to it.

"Well," I says, "I'm 'ere not because I deserves to be, but because I'm old enuf to be the mother of nearly every one," as I see pleased all the lot as was a-settin' round me, tho' not one on 'em will ever see fifty no more; but I says, "Don't let nobody deceive theirselves over me, as am a plain spoken party, and won't never give no countenance to ways as I don't 'old with, for," I says, "not if they was to make me Queen of the Mormons I wouldn't never give in to their ways, and as to bein' a man's wife, with six or seven others in the same 'ouse, why, a woman degrades herself by so doin', and if she did right would give it the willin 'ot with the fire-shovel over 'is 'ead, and take and turn the 'ussey into the street the werry first

time as he tried it on a-bringin' 'er into the place."

I says, "Any woman, as is a woman, did ought to be ashamed on 'er own sect for even thinkin' of such bold houtrageous ways.

"But," I says, "it's my opinion as a fieldmale as does 'er dooty as a wife and a mother, ain't likely to 'ave 'er 'usband a-tryin' it on to bring another wife 'ome, leastways not in any decent place, as might be a second floor, as in course you cannot call them out-of-the-way 'oles and corners as there is in Merryker; not as I've a word to say agin the Merrykins' be'aviour to ladies, as will give up their seats in a railway to a lady; and in course if they likes to diworce their wives and take on a fresh one every month or so, that's their business and nothink to do with me, not so long as they don't want to marry into my family; but ain't so downright owdacious as 'avin' a lot of wives in one 'ouse, as is like 'eathen Turkeys, and not Christian men.

"But, as I were a-sayin', in course if heverythink is to be turned upside down, why, then let's begin, as I were a-sayin' to Mrs. Bewshem only last week, as were doin' 'arf a day's ironin', and said as 'er gal 'ad a 'ard place thro' only every other Sunday evenin' out. I says, 'So much the better; for,' I says, 'I don't 'old with young gals a-filanderin' about of a Sunday evenin' along with a parcel of

boys, and,' I says, 'I ain't sure as all that chapel goin' don't do more 'arm than good.'"

"'Ear, 'ear," says a 'ole lot.

"Not," I says, "as I'm a-goin' to speak agin chapels, but I do 'old as young people didn't ought to be throwed too much together, as 'ave led to dreadful misery.

"Not in course as a young woman as is well brought up don't know 'ow to behave 'erself even in chapel, and as to them 'Shakers,' why, I'd soon send them to the 'Ouse of Correction if I'd my way.

"But," I says, "if you really wants to know wot 'Women's Rights' is," I says, "it's to act right."

Says Miss Snapley, a-whisperin' to me, "We wants you to be so kind as to read this ere paper to the meetin'."

I says, "All right; only let me get my specs," as I knowed I 'adn't brought 'em; so says, "Wherever can they be? Will any one lend me a pair?"

Well, all them old gals on the platform says as they none on 'em used 'em.

So I says, "I'll lay a wager as you can't one on you thread a needle without 'em;" as made parties larf.

So I says to Miss Snapley, "You take and read the paper then."

She says as she couldn't were it ever so afore so many.

Mrs. Wallerby she said, as she were too nervous.

So I says, "Rubbish," and jest then a werry nice young party she offered to come up and do it.

So I says, "By all means;" and up she come, and when she begun a-readin' I never did 'ear sich shameful rubbish, as it were all about women bein' as free as men, and as there wasn't to be no marriages and no families, as reg'lar made my 'air stand on end, as the sayin' is, partickler as that young gal got that escited, with 'er face all flushed, and 'er 'air a-comin' down, and then at last she busted out a-cryin' with strong 'issterics.

So I says, "Take 'er away, poor thing, and throw some water in 'er face," as some one led 'er out of the room.

So I thinks as she were quite fit for to be a perliceman, or anythink as wants strong nerves.

So I looks round and says, "Ladies, is there any one a-goin' to speak?"

A 'ole lot 'ollers out, "Yes."

I says, "All right; but," I says, "wait for your turns, as is the rules; and mind you only speaks ten minits, this lady tells me," as were the seckertary a-settin' next me, "and if you don't stop, I shall bring you up short," as the sayin' is.

Well, up gets a fieldmale as were old enuf to know better, and says as marriage were slavery and men was tyrants, and that a family dragged down thousan's to misery as might be 'appy and free.

Well, then a scraggy old gal in specs, she got up and says as thro' waitin' for 'usbans there was thousan's blighted for life, and as it ought to be jest as much a woman's rights to ask a man to marry 'er as for a man to ask a woman to marry 'im; and as she did ought to 'ave the right for to leave 'im when she were tired of 'im; and as to the children, they did ought to be the care of the State for to bring up.

A good many more spoke over it, some a deal wuss than that; so a-knowin' as my duty as a chairwoman was to 'old my tung, I didn't say nothink, but let 'em 'ave rope enuf, as the sayin' is; only 'ad 'ard work to keep a lot on 'em from speakin' all at once.

At last, when they'd most on 'em 'ad their say, I got up and says, "My ladies," says I, "I've set and 'eard you till pretty nigh putrified, wot with the 'eat, and the row; but," I says, "I moves as this 'ere meetin' adjourns, as they says in Parlyment; for," I says, "I for one am a-droppin', and nutriment I must 'ave, if only in the way of suction."

Well, there was a dreadful row, some wantin'

one thing and some another, and I couldn't get any on 'em to act reasonable.

So I says, "Ladies, if you won't give ten minits for refreshments, I for one must leave my chair, thro' bein' that parched."

Some one 'ollers, "There's water on the table."

I says, "Yes, and nice 'ot stuff it must be by this time, so let them as likes it drink it; but," I says, "it would be as much as my life's worth to put it to my lips. But," I says, "if you won't give ten minits, then don't; but," I says, "jest wait a minit, and I'll give you a bit of my mind." So they says, "'ear, 'ear."

"Well, then," I says, "I think you're a set of disgraceful old toads for to dare to hutter sich waggerbone things, as is all werry well for old, dried-up mummies like some on you, as it don't matter wot you does, or where you goes; but," I says, "there's some decent young people present as you'd better take my adwice, my dears, and go 'ome to your mothers, and not let these old wipers mislead you."

I 'adn't 'ardly said the words, when there were a reg'lar yell from them old gals on the platform.

So I says, a-dashin' down my bonnet, as I'd got the strings untied for coolness, "Come on if you dare, and assault me, for," I says, "I ain't afraid on you, not if you was all on you the same as Dix-

blank, as I don't consider you no better." I says, "I'm a true British wife and mother, and ain't a-goin' to set and 'ear sich old cats as you run them decent ways down."

"Turn 'er out," shouts one.

I says, "Turn away, for I've said my say, and am quite willin' to go, and never wanted to come; and if it were to come to my 'usband's ears as I'd been 'ere, I do believe he'd go thro' the Diworce Court over it, thro' bein' that ashamed on me."

Well, jest as I were a-goin' to say a deal more, if the place didn't take and turn suddin dark, and there was a reg'lar scrimmage. I'm sure the knocks and thumps as I got must 'ave been downright mallis; not as I moved, but stuck to my chair till the gas were lighted agin, and then the room were pretty nigh empty, with benches upset, and the table turned right over, and my bonnet that tore about as I couldn't find out which way to put it on agin.

I goes to get out of my chair, and were that cramped as I couldn't 'ardly move, and was a-gettin' off the platform when my legs seemed to give way with me, and down I set suddin in the nearest seat, never a-dreamin' as there were anyone a-settin' behind me, as proved to be a old party as only give a groan like, and fainted.

I calls for some one to 'elp me with 'er, but

everyone were a-urryin' out of the room, and didn't take no notice of me, and I couldn't get at my smellin' salts for a bit; but, when I did, they pretty soon waked that party up, as give a scream, and I really did think 'er breath were gone for ever, cos, in course, them salts was double strong thro' the 'eat of the room.

So I says, "I really begs pardon, but thought you was dead faint."

She says, "Get out, do, you old bullock, to tread on anyone's soft corn, as you took and reg'lar jumped on. I've 'arf a mind to give you in charge," and begun a-rubbin' 'er foot.

So I turns away from 'er for to look for Miss Snapley and Mrs. Wallerby, but they wasn't neither on 'em wisible.

Well, arter a bit, everyone were gone, and a man comes up to me and says, "You can't stop 'ere."

I says, "My good man, who wants to?" I says, "I only come to oblige friends; but," I says, "whyever was the lights all put out?"

"Oh!" he says, "that were for the dark scenes."

I says, "I'm sure I didn't want no dark scenes."

"Oh!" he says, "didn't you? Why," he says, "I were told you were a-goin' to float thro' the air a-playin' on a inwisible wiolin and a-blowin' of a

bugle at the same time; and, peepin' thro' the door for my signal, I see you dash off your bonnet. I thought you were a-goin' to start, and turned off the gas."

I says, "Wot a idea!"

He says to me, "Why, you're the sperrits, ain't you?"

I says, "Bless you, no! I come about Women's Rights, as I were asked to."

"Oh!" he says; "then I come to the wrong room, as am sorry, but 'ad orders to turn down the lights."

"Well," I says, "it's well it's no wuss, as might 'ave been the death of some on us; as nothink ain't more startlin' than suddin darkness, as always gives me a turn; but as to me a-meanin' to jump on this lady, I never did, as knows my place too well for that."

She says, "I do believe as your right place is the station-'ouse, for I think as it's a reg'lar decoy, this 'ere meetin'."

I see there weren't no pacifyin' 'er, as were goin' down the room with a limp, as certingly a soft corn is hagony, and nothink for it like French chalk; so I went out of the place, and got a bus 'ome.

The next day, fust thing, I went to Mrs. Padwick's for to ask arter 'er, and found 'er up and better; but who should be there but Miss Snapley,

as bust into tears on seein' me, and says, "Oh! Mrs. Brown, it were a-cruel in you! Cruel!"

I says, "I likes that! I'm sure the blows and pinches I got wos cruelty to me. And wotever for? I never wanted to go to your meetin'."

"Then, why did you offer, and say as you'd do your uttermost to 'elp in the good cause?"

I says, "I never uttered sich words!"

"Oh!" she says. "Here's your own note." And out she pulls a bit of a paper as wasn't never rote by me, a-sayin' as "Mrs. Brown would be 'appy to give all 'er support to that cause."

I says, "I never rote sich words, for I don't know wot the cause were."

Says Miss Snapley, "Oh! what false'ood! Why, you spoke on it werry proper to me and Mrs. Wallerby; and then to forget yourself so on the platform!"

I says, "Wotever are you a-talkin' about? for, to begin with, I never rote that note."

Says Miss Snapley, "Didn't you say as it were a laudible hact to get single women, whether widders or no, settled?"

I says, "I never thought as you and that old fright, Mrs. Wallerby, were illudin' to yourselves. Why, who would think of marryin' either on you? She's fifty-four; and, when she dies of old age, you'll quake with fear, as the sayin' is."

She says, "You're a base, false-tunged party, and I'll see if the Society won't persecute you."

I says, "If they was to burn me at the stake, it wouldn't get you 'usbands; as did ought to be ashamed on yourselves to 'ave 'ticed a decent woman into sich a place, as you said was to be 'Andover Square Rooms, and wasn't nothink of the sort, but a reg'lar Socialist 'ole near Oxford Market, and it's a mussy as there wasn't murder. But," I says, "you take my adwice, as is a respectable party. Give up them wagaries, for you won't never get a 'usband by them means, as ain't respectable; so," I says, "be content for to die single, and bless your stars as you are, for, depend on it, no man won't marry you, except in the 'opes as you've got a bit of money, as he'll rob you of, and then desert you."

She busted out a-cryin' fresh, and off she went; and, when she were gone, Mrs. Padwick told me as a young feller 'ad been a-payin' 'is 'dresses to 'er, and 'ad gone off the day afore to the West Indies, a-sayin' as it couldn't never be; and she got the letter when she got 'ome last night.

Well, in course I couldn t 'elp that; but Mrs. Padwick told me as she'd 'ad a narrer escape, for he kep' up the game till he found out as all as she 'ad were thirty-five pounds a-year from the Welt and Upper Leathers Company, as 'er father were a liveryman on.

So I felt as I'd done 'er a good turn; but I certingly will never set my foot in a meetin' no more, not even a Quaker's, as is that quiet as there ain't no fear of a row; and I'm sure, if I do, I shall 'ave Brown a ragin' lunytic over it, as can't abear sich goin's on. So, in course, I knows my dooty as a wife too well for to fly in 'is face over it, as may be Women's Rights, but not their dooties, as, in course, is at 'ome; and, I'm sure, 'ow parties as 'ave got families can spare the time to be about the streets, for I never did used to 'ave no time, when my children was young, for nothink; and if I got my gownd on and my cap by tea-time, I thought myself a lucky woman, as always 'ad washin' of a Monday, when Brown went to 'is club of a evenin', and never seemed to get straight till about Friday, as I considers the week pretty nigh gone by that time; with needlework a-fillin' up all your spare time, and never did anyone see a child of mine, nor yet their father, with a 'ole in their socks, tho' many a patch, as I never were ashamed on, tho' considerin' of rags a disgrace, the same as poverty bein' no sin, tho' certingly werry ill convenient, with a large family to bring up, as never 'ad but five myself, as two is in Stepney Churchyard, as I never espected to rare, with the rest settled, and nothink to complain on beyond Joe not a-ritin' that reg'lar as I could wish; and certingly am sorry as 'Liza don't

live nearer, for I shan't never 'ave no comfort with Mary-Ann; tho' I keeps myself to myself, and am not one to interfere, and if all mother-in-laws was like me, all them jokes about 'em as I'm downright sick on myself, and considers werry undootiful, wouldn't be made no more, and preaps the sons-in-law would come in for their turns to be made fun on.

I'm sure "Women's Rights" is things as nobody don't seem to understand any more than who Lester Square belongs to, as is a sort of no man's land, with that party on 'orseback, as did used to stand in the middle, as some says as were July Seizer, the first Roman Catholic as ever landed, tho' I 'ave 'eard say it were King George 'isself, as they've been and moved down agin the bottom of the 'Aymarket agin the long crossing, as is where the bricklayer's labourer dropped the ladder on to the lady's nose, as were a dancer, and never danced no more, poor thing, as 'owever could she, with 'er nose drove in, as were a frightful eyesore.

But, as I were a-sayin', if women don't get their rights cats does, for I see as there's a feller got a month for ill-usin' of a cat, as is more than he'd 'ave got if she'd been 'is wife, as it's only three months if you kills 'er: I means the woman, not the cat.

I were up to my eyes, as the sayin' is, in unpickin' of my last summer muslin, thro' well

a-knowin' when it do come in 'ot I shan't be able to move under my satin cloth, nor yet my surge, as am one as feels the 'eat, so a-findin' as my salmon-color musling, with a green leaf, 'ad kep its color wonderful, for greens is apt to fly, partickler with them washin' powders, as a pinch of pearl-ash were all my dear mother did used to put in the water.

Well, a-lookin' at that musling, I says, "I know what I'll do; I'll take it off at the waist, and turn the skirt bottom uppermost, as will be all the fresher, and 'ave got a party a-comin' to work in the name of Freestone, as 'ad been in a West End 'ouse, and worked for the Queen Dowyger."

I were a-rippin' away at that skirt, and might 'ave saved myself the trouble, for when that Miss Freestone came, she didn't know no more about fittin' you than a lamp-post, and set that gownd on at the gethers all crooked, so it wouldn't never set straight, and when I walked would wobble all round my legs crooked.

Well, as I were there with my 'ands full of un-pickin', while Miss Freestone were a-fixin' a new body for me, I looks up and see 'er with 'er mouth chuck full of pins, as the sayin' is.

I says, "For mussy sake spit 'em out," as she needn't 'ave done all over 'er work, thro' there bein' a saucer to 'old 'em; but said as I'd that startled 'er as she didn't know wot she were a-doin.'

"Well," I says, "I'm sure you startled me, for I never can't a-bear to see nobody put pins in their mouth since poor Maria Fricker died on 'em, as were 'prentice to a dressmaker, and jest out of 'er time, when she come 'ome to 'er mother with that pain in 'er side as set upright she couldn't, so got a letter for the 'ospital.

"The doctors was all reg'lar puzzled over 'er, partickler a tumour as come out at 'er elbow, as broke nat'ral, and out come a 'ole paper of pins, as she must 'ave swallowed, and been a-lurkin' in 'er constitution for years, as is base metal, and not 'olesome steel like a needle, so she never 'eld up 'er 'ead nor rallied properly, and were the color of a guinea when I see 'er as were, no doubt, the verdigris a-flyin' about 'er; as anyone knows a pin will turn to as green as grass.

Well, jest as I were a-speakin' with my 'ead full of pins, in come Miss Tatpole, as did used to be a great 'and with "Women's Rights," but 'ave give 'em up thro' a minister, as she thought were a-comin' a-courtin' 'er.

So she says, "I'm glad as I've found you at 'ome, for," she says, "I wants you to sign a partition agin the Othernashuns Creed."

"Law!" I says, "wotever 'ave I got to do with them Othernashuns, or their creed either?"

"Oh!" she says, "you are so droll. Why," she

says, "it's wot is said in church a good many times a year, as many parties don't 'old with."

"Well, then," I says, "let 'em go to another church where it ain't said."

"Ah! but," she says, "it's werry uncharitable a-condemnin' all them as don't believe it."

"Well," I says, "that's wot every one does to them, as they don't agree with, cos, if not, wot's the use of 'avin' so many religions, as can't all be right; but," I says, "if this 'ere creed is wrong, why don't the ministers leave it out, cos it's werry wrong in them to say anythink in church as ain't right?"

"Ah!" says Miss Tatpole, "that's where it is; some ministers likes it, and some don't."

"Well, then," I says, "let the Queen, as is 'ead of the church, settle it; cos, now I comes to think on it, I 'ave 'eard parties speak about that creed; 'ow King George the Third, never would say it, cos he considered it were downright Catholic, as he didn't 'old with, and said as he'd rather 'ave 'is 'ead on the block than give in to them, as were in course 'is dooty, cos if they'd 'ad their rights he never would 'ave been king."

Says Miss Tatpole, "Then you'll sign this partition, as bein' got up agin it."

I says, "No, I thank you, it ain't no busyness of mine, as thinks the parsons 'ad best settle their

own affairs their own way; and if they can't agree, why, Queen Victoria 'ad better settle it for em?"

Says Miss Tatpole, "The bishops is all agin it, leastways most on 'em with the Archbishop at their 'ead; tho' 'is 'ealth is that bad as he might 'ave to retire, and then there'd be a rush for 'is place."

"Well," I says, "it's no busyness of mine, as don't 'old with the 'Stablished Church a-goin' on like that, so," I says, "let them as does settle it."

Says Miss Tatpole, "No one don't understand it."

I says, "As to that, don't talk foolishness, my good friend, cos," I says, "if you was only to believe what you understands, you'd believe next to nothink at all, as is the way with all on us as ain't got the time nor yet the learnin' to settle them pints as 'ave puzzled the wisest, so," I says, "it would be, I considers, great impidence in me for to give my opinion over that as my better's can't agree about."

When Brown come in he was reg'lar up about that there creed, a-sayin' as I'd done right not for to sign it; "Cos," he says, "if they're a-goin' to do away with one, let 'em do away with all, the same as they've been and done in Oxford; as wot it really means is this, that everybody is right, and nobody in the wrong."

"Well, then," I says, "there's a end to all religion, and conwertin' the 'eathen, and all like that?"

"Yes," says he, "in course."

"Well, then," I says, "I tell you wot it is; they werry soon will burn the Bible, and shet up the churches."

"Ah!" says Brown, "you'd not 'ave many churches open if there wasn't a good livin' to be got out of 'em."

I says, "Don't talk like that," I says, "Brown, don't; you makes my blood run cold. Why, you're a-turnin' a reg'lar Socialist."

Says he, "Not a bit on it; only," he says, "I 'ates 'umbug, and should be glad to see it put down; for," he says, "there's no man alive as I respects more than a minister as is a-doin' 'is dooty. But," he says, "for a man to 'ave swore solemn as he believes things as he don't believe a word on in 'is 'art," he says, "in my opinion, he's no better than a Socialist—I don't care whether he's a bishop, or a dean, or only a curate."

So, a-seein' as Brown were a-gettin' escited, I drops the subjic—leastways, changes it into Women's Rights, thro' a-sayin' as I'd 'eard say as they was a-goin' werry soon for to send fieldmales into Parlyment.

He says, "Law bless you! they ain't wanted, for there's plenty of old women in there, both Lords and Commons, as can't settle nothink."

"Well," I says, "certingly they must be duffers

over this 'ere Allyblammer Case, as it were werry ridiculus for them Merrykins to send over that there Miss Grant for to talk it over with Queen Wictoria, as, in course, wouldn't broach the subjic, well a-knowin' as, in course, Miss Grant ain't no more than Miss Smith over there, where they're all equals.

"Cos, in course, them Presidents ain't nobody when once their time is up, and they can't go a-sendin' their sons and dorters all over the place, as if they was Princes and Princesses."

Says Brown, "It's all rubbish about bein' equal, cos, if they really was, they wouldn't 'ave no sort of State kep' up; with their White 'Ouse, as is, arter all, only a sham pallis, and that there President a-receivin' of Forrin Ministers jest as if he was a King, tho' he may be a-chewin' and spittin' all the time; cos, if there were a real Republic, a carpenter or a bricklayer might be President, and only get paid for the time as he was took off 'is work, jest 'is reg'lar wages and no more. But it's all 'umbug and sham, and, in course, if any President 'ad got a good 'ead on 'is shoulders, and a strong army at 'is back, he'd 'ave took and made 'isself a Emperor long ago, like Old Boney did in France, as 'ave been the same story all the world over, and will be till the end, leastways them's my opinions."

I says, "Right you are; and as to women in Parlyment, I should like to know what's to become

of their 'usband's shirt-buttons, and who's to look arter the family, with them kep' at the 'Ouse till goodness knows wot 'our in the mornin'?"

"Yes," says Brown, "and jest fancy the talkin', as is long enuf now, but what would it be with you, my right 'onerable friend, on your legs, 'avin' caught the Speaker's eye!"

I says, "I'm sure I shouldn't talk long if I 'ad to stand at it, for I can't even iron a few fine things up now without a-feelin' of it for days; and as to ketchin' anyone's eye, why," I says, "they don't go on like that in Parlyment, I 'opes; tho' I 'ave 'eard say as there's a deal too much larkin', and shoutin', and some a-imitatin' cock-crowin', as is low ways, I considers, and, in course, wot no lady couldn't stoop to."

Says Brown, "Don't you be afraid, old gal; there ain't no fear of them members a-lettin' no fieldmales in, cos Parlyment's one of the few places where a man can get away from 'is wife in."

I says, "Mr. Brown, you needn't talk like that, for I'm sure, wot with the clubs and one place and another, them swells get away from their wives easy enuf."

"Yes," says Brown, "and that's why they won't let 'em into Parlyment; for it would be a nice go if a man were one side and 'is wife the other, a-'ammerin' away."

"Jest fancy Gladstin a-goin' in for the ballet, and Mrs. Gladstin bein' agin it."

"Which, in course, she would be," I says, "like any decent mother of a family, as wouldn't allow no dorter of 'er'n to go on like that, as is a deal too bold, I considers."

Says Brown, "I don't mean the dancin' ballet, but the wotin' ballet."

"Ah!" I says, "they both come from France, and will bring us to ruin in the end; but," I says, "Queen Wictoria will set 'er face agin it, that's one comfort, and right she is, for them's the things as underminds the Constitution, and 'ave brought a-many to misery."

Says Brown, "Well, you're a good un to mix things up; and as to settin' you right, why, they won't even do that, I don't believe, not when you're in Parlyment."

I never do mind Brown a-chaffin' me, cos he's a man as I looks up to, as is wot every woman did ought to with a 'usband as is worth the name, tho' I'm sure there's a many as looks down on 'em, and serve 'em right, too, the same as poor Mrs. Priddens, as 'ad a nice little 'ome as ever you see in a day's walk, when what should he do but go and give a bill of sale on it unbeknown to 'er, and 'ad everythink seized one mornin', down to the tea-caddy and the family Bible, and found 'er myself a-

settin' a-cryin' 'er eyes out, with 'er face tied up, on a empty box in 'er back parlour, and 'im gone off to Merryker.

Not as he were so bad as some cases a I 'ave knowed; but then, really, arter all, the women is sich fools as to drive you pretty nigh mad, as will give up their rights even when they've got 'em, like Mrs. Elmer, as 'ad lodged with Mrs. Padwick on and off, and quite a elderly party, as come in one day a-sayin' she were married in a new black wig and a set of teeth as was like the driven snow, only too big for 'er mouth, and showed the gold.

So in course we wished 'er joy, as asked Mrs. Padwick if she'd take 'em in.

As she said she could not for a week or so, thro' bein' let to a single lady.

She says, "Oh, that'll do, for me and Hoctavius is a-goin' to Gravesend by the three o'clock boat," and then found out as she'd been married that werry mornin', but kep dark over the church.

Just arter a week they come in one evenin', and Mrs. Padwick nor me wasn't at 'ome, for I was a-stayin' with 'er, but give me a awful turn, a-comin' in between the lights and a-meetin' of 'im full but, as the sayin' is, in the passage, as were a arf-cast, as I knowed by 'is woolley 'ead and lark 'eels, as made 'im reg'lar pickaxe feet, with the leg a-comin' in the middle like, as 'adn't been mar-

ried a fortnight when rows begun, and 'er a widder, as were old enuf to know better, and obligated to go thro' the court under the three months for purtection, and 'ad got rid of the feller as come back to the lodgin's the next day with 'er back turned, no doubt 'avin' watched Mrs. Padwick out, and walked past the gal, leastways so she says, as bold as brass, up into the fust floor, and locked 'isself in.

I were a-settin' at work in the back parlour, only doin' of a bit of frillin' for a night-cap border, when I 'eard a lumpin' over'ead, so goes to the top of the kitchen stairs, and asks the gal who she'd let in, as said, "Only the gent on the fust floor, as 'ave come back."

I see by her way as she was in the swim with 'im, so says to 'er, "Susan, go as far as the green-grocer's, and get two bunches of turnip-redishes."

She says, as sharp as a needle, "There's some in the 'ouse."

I says, "Only them few as was left at dinner, so do as I asks you."

She says, "Not afore I've cleaned myself, I suppose."

I says, "If you won't go, say so, and don't stand there a-banterin' words with me."

She says, "I'm a-washin' of my 'ands and face, and 'ave got my gownd off to my waist."

I didn't say nothink more, a knowin' well as she 'adn't no right to be a-washin' 'erself in the back kitchen, as is ways as Mrs. Padwick don't 'old with any more than me.

There's a glass door the top of them kitchen stairs, as is a good thing for keepin' the smell of the dinner under, for I do think as the smell of fryin' fish in a 'ouse is pretty nigh as bad as drains.

So I took and locked that door, and then I walks to the front door and locks that, and put the key in my pocket, and stood at the parlour winder a-waitin' for a perliceman.

I 'eard my gentleman come down on tiptoe, and try to open the front door.

I says, "You may whistle for the key, my man," and 'eard 'im go up-stairs and ring the bell, and jest then the perlice come by.

I 'eld up my finger to 'im to stop, and runs to the door, and told 'im on the step as there was a party up-stairs a-robbin' the lodgin's, and 'adn't got the words out when down come my gentleman.

He was a-goin' to pass me when he come slap on the perlice, as made 'im start back.

Says the perlice to me, "Is this the party?"

I says, "Yes."

Says the chap, a-bouncin', "Wot do you mean? I lodge 'ere."

I says, "You do not, and 'ave not been 'ere

over six weeks, and I'm not a-goin' to let you out till I see wot you've got."

He says, "All my own property, leastways my wife's."

I says, "You know you are diworced."

He says, "I ain't."

I says, "You are."

Says the perlice, "If you've 'ad a row, you'd better make it up."

I says, "I've 'ad no row."

"Well," he says, "your old enuf to be 'is mother, so didn't ought to be too hard on 'im."

I says, "Wot of that?"

"Why," he says, "if you marries a young feller, you must espect 'im to kick over the trace."

I says, "Perliceman, I didn't call you in for none of your adwice, as I considers impidence; this man ain't no 'usband of mine, and ain't no right in 'ere, and shan't go till he's give up the property."

Well, jest then who should come up to the door but Mrs. Elmer 'erself, as 'ad told me she'd diworced this 'ere 'arf nigger chap.

As soon as the feller see 'er, he says, "Oh, Annabella," he says, "I can't live without you. Oh," he says, "be not 'ard-'arted," and 'olds out 'is arms.

She says, "Oh, Hoctavius, oh!" says she, and flings 'erself at 'im, a-cryin' out, "he loves me still!"

So I says, "Yes, and 'ave been a-plunderin' your drawers."

She says, "'Ow dare you interfere!"

So I says, "Perliceman, you can go."

Says that old fool of a woman, "Wot! 'ave you dared to send for a perlice to take 'im from me! Oh," she says, "no one shan't tear 'im from me!" and upstairs they both went, 'er a-leavin' of 'er chinyon on the door-mat, and all 'er false 'air shoved back arf off 'er 'ead.

So I give the perlice a shillin', and said as I'd stand by 'im if there was any trouble about it; and off I sent 'im, and then goes down into the kitchen, and found as that gal 'ad gone out by the airy door, and said it were for the redishes.

So when Mrs. Padwick come in we 'ad our tea, and I were a-tellin' 'er 'ow Mrs. Elmer had behaved, as 'ad sent out for pickled salmon and cowcumber with bottle stout, and all for that black beast.

So in course we didn't take no notice on 'em, not even when the gal said, later on, as she were goin' for a cab, as they was goin' to the play on the fust floor."

Well, the cab come, and into it that feller got with a carpet-bag, as I see 'im myself thro' the

parlour blinds, and says to Mrs. Padwick, "He's off like a gun, as the sayin' is."

Well, we didn't 'ear no noise of any one a-movin' upstairs, so I says, "she's werry quiet."

Says the gal, as were layin' the supper, "She's gone out."

I says, "Not in the cab."

"No," she says; "but when I came back with it Mr. Elmer met me on the stairs, and said as 'is good lady 'ad stepped on fust thro' 'avin' to get a pair of gloves, and he were a-goin' to pick 'er up."

So we didn't say no more, but 'ad our suppers, and 'ad jest finished, when the gal come in as white as hashes, and says, "Oh, I'm afraid as Mrs. Elmer is dead on the 'earth-rug."

So me and Mrs. Padwick 'urries up, and the fust thing we did was to run slap agin the table as the gal 'ad pulled up near the door, and not turned up the gas, and upset everythink.

But when we got a light both rooms was in a nice confusion, with the drawers in the bed-rooms open, and sure enuf, on the 'earth-rug, without 'er wig, was that old fool aperiently dead.

I says, "Don't go for a doctor," as the gal said she'd run for, "not till we sees more on it, as in my opinion is licker, but may 'ave been 'occussed in that bottle porter."

We got 'er on to the sofy, and sure enuf she were that strong of sperrits as showed it was partly drink any'ow.

So I says, "'Ow was it as that gal didn't come up and clear away as soon as they was gone out?"

She began a-cryin', and sayin' as I suspected 'er.

I says, "And so I do, cos," I says, "where's the glasses as they've been a-drinkin' out on?"

She says, "I took 'em down and washed 'em."

I says, "And didn't see this poor lady a-layin' on the 'earth-rug."

She says, "She was not there, as must 'ave been in the bed-room."

I says, "Nonsense; why, it's werry clear as she've been and slipped out of this 'ere easy-chair, but," I says to Mrs. Padwick, "we mustn't let 'er die in a sinkerpy like this;" so set to work for to rouse her with shakin' 'er and smellin' salts, and cold water round 'er 'ead, as took effect all the sooner thro' 'er bein' that bald.

Says Mrs. Padwick, "'Adn't we better 'ave the doctor?"

I says, "Bless your 'art, it's not dangerous, tho' I do believe as she've been drugged, and that 'ussey's in it, or she wouldn't never 'ave been and washed up them glasses so quick."

Arter a time we got the old idjot to bed, and it

were a precious long time, and took a deal of trouble, I can tell you, afore she were 'erself agin; and 'er fust words was, "Hoctavius, do you love me?"

I says, "Bother Hoctavius! 'ere, take this," and give 'er a strong cup of tea.

Mrs. Padwick 'ad been down to make it for 'er, and says to me, "You're right about that gal, for she've been and lewanted."

We set up with that old woman all night, and in the mornin' she was 'erself, and when she come to look about, that feller 'ad took everythink as he could lay 'ands on, even a 'ansom shawl and a lace wail with a black satin gown, as no doubt that wile 'ussey of a gal 'ad 'elped 'im pack.

In course it weren't no good a-goin' to the lawyer, cos she 'ad been and compounded a fellerny with 'im, so 'ad put 'erself in the wrong box, and it's a mussy as she'd got 'er bit of money settled on 'erself afore they was married, as was only at the Register's, and then to find out as he'd been cook aboard a steamer with three wives livin', as she met permiscuous at the railway refreshment bar agin the Wictoria Station, as couldn't be espected to bring no 'appiness.

She didn't stop long arter with Mrs. Padwick, and never so much as thanked me for my trouble, and I do believe thought it was my fault as the

feller 'ad been and deserted 'er, as got clean off with the swag, but come 'ome to 'im in the long run, for she rote to Mrs. Padwick a-sayin' as he were took up for bein' in some book robbery, as I believe he were the receiver on, and got seven years for 'is pains.

So I went to see 'er at 'is trial; and if that old fool didn't try to get 'im off, and fretted dreadful arter 'im, a-sayin' to me, "Oh, Mrs. Brown, he were my 'usband arter all!"

I says, "You may say arter all, indeed; why, he were a double-dyed biggymarian, and you wasn't a bit 'is lawful wife, and I don't consider as it's decent in you for to be mixed up with sich a feller."

I were talkin' to 'er like that, when she turned on me and says, "Ah! you always was agin 'im, and I do wish I 'adn't excepted your company 'ere."

"Well," I says, "I never wanted to come, and I think you might be civil over it."

She bounced away from me, a-leavin' me a-standin' jest outside the Court, as I'd only come to out of charity, as she were a poor deserted creetur, tho' an old fool, and couldn't get none of 'er friends to so much as look at 'er, as was 'er fust 'usband's family, and there wasn't a soul not so much as to speak to 'er at the Old Bailey, as I went to thro' 'er a-comin' to ask Mrs. Padwick to go with 'er to the

trial, as were laid up with 'er leg, and couldn't move, so asked me, as didn't like to refuse. "But," I says, "not to wait about day arter day, with 'arf the thieves' wives in London round me."

So I went with 'er the werry day as 'is trial come on, and were a-talkin' to 'er in the court-yard when he were sentenced; for she were that nervous as go into Court she couldn't, and I didn't want to, tho' I 'oners a Judge and respects a Jury.

Well, jest as the lawyer come out and told us as it were seven years, she 'ad them words with me, and walks off; and then a fieldmale come a-rushin' out of the Court like mad, and seizin' 'old of me, and would 'ave made ribbins of my bonnet, and tore off my shawl and collar, if the perlice, as was a-standin' all about, 'adn't rushed in atween us.

She yelled, and screamed, and says, "Let me get at 'er. I'll 'ave 'er life, as 'ave been and 'ticed 'im away from the others, and rounded on 'im."

I says, a-pickin' myself up a bit, "Perlice," I says, "'old 'er off. She's mad."

"No," she says, "I ain't; but you're a base creetur to take and 'tice away a man from 'is wife."

So, when the perlice 'ad took 'er away, I says to parties as was a-standin' round a-growlin' at me, "I do assure you as I don't 'ardly know the man from Adam."

Says a sarjent a-comin' up, "You'd better go,

and it's a pity as you come, all the lot on you, as, in course, aggrawates the woman, as is 'is lawful wife."

Then one or two others begun a-goin' on, so as I thought as I should be mobbed; so I begs that sarjent to order a cab for me, and so he did, and in I got, and drove away, all the mob a-jeerin' and a-'ootin' at me, and some on 'em took and pelted the cab with mud, as I got a large dab on in my eye, in not a-pullin' up the winder quick enuf, and got back to Mrs. Padwick's more dead than alive, and 'ad to give the cabman double fare, for 'is cab were a sight, and lucky no winders broke; and if that old fool of a woman didn't write to Mrs. Padwick and say as I'd took away 'er character, a-sayin' as she were not that feller's lawful wife, as were aperient to the meanest compacities.

So really, arter all, I don't see as it's much use a-makin' laws for to purtect Women's Rights, cos the fust thing as they'd do is to break 'em themselves.

I'm sure the bother Brown 'ad over old Ducket's granddorter, as were in the coal-tar line, and left 'er a thousand pounds, with Brown a trustee, thro' 'er 'avin' married a scamp as wanted to get 'old of the money to start in a livery-stable; and I'm sure the abuse as that woman come and give me on my own door-step cos Brown wouldn't give in, you'd 'ave thought as we was robbin' 'er.

But all as Brown said to 'er were, "If your grandfather 'ad wanted your 'usband to 'ave 'ad the money to speculate with, he wouldn't never 'ave left me the trust; and I'm a man as never broke my word with any man livin', and ain't a-goin' to do with one as is dead."

She wasn't never 'arf grateful to Brown for savin' 'er bit of money, as brought 'er in jest on forty pounds a-year, as were a great 'elp to 'er when left a widder with one little boy as were a cripple; not as Brown wanted 'er gratitude, nor me neither, cos we felt as we'd done our dooty in a-sayin' of 'er nay, tho' she always said if 'er Sam 'ad got the money she might 'ave been a-ridin' in 'er carridge.

But we never wasn't friends, so it didn't matter; but as to leavin' women to manage property, I'm sure there ain't one in ten million as can do it, and then in general makes a mess on it, thro' bein' either too mean and graspin', or else lettin' some feller get old on 'em, the same as Mrs. Martin, as were left a widder with seven well prowided for, and married a billiard-marker, as would 'ave spent every shillin' on it, only Brown he rote to them young people's uncle, as weren't on terms with the widder, but come and throwed the 'ole lot into Chancery, as, at any rate, is a better guardian than a billiard-marker, and won't lay in bed all day, and

set up a-smokin' and drinkin' over billiards 'arf the night.

I am not one to speak agin my own sect, but I must say as women did ought to 'ave their little properties tied down to theirselves, and not let any feller as picks 'em up make ducks and drakes on it, as the sayin' is, as reduces many a one as 'ave been born in comfort to come down in the world, the same as Mrs. Peltron, as 'er father were a brass-founder, with a 'ansom 'ouse, and a parlour each side of the door, near Limus Church, and 'ad ev'ry luxury, with green peas on the table when three shillin's a-peck, as only left one dorter, tho' two sons, as never settled till 'er mother died, as must 'ave been past thirty, tho' the youngest, and fifteen years atween 'er and 'er next brother, as 'ad to be nussed in a clothes-basket thro' 'er mother 'avin' give away the cradle and all thoughts of a family, as shows as there's no tellin' wot a day may bring forth, as the sayin' is.

Not but wot old Mr. Webble did tie 'er money up, but never give a thought about 'er marryin' when he added up a coddlesell, as they calls it, as shows that no woman, whether married or single, gentle or simple, as the sayin' is, never didn't ought to 'ave no power, for if poor Mary Ann Webble 'adn't been able to 'ave made over 'er trust when she married that young Peltron agin 'er brothers'

wishes, why, she wouldn't never 'ave come down as she did in the world, to 'ave 'er own father's door shet in 'er face by 'er own brother's wife as 'is 'ard lines; but certingly none of the family didn't 'old with the match, thro' bein' strict chapel-goers, and 'im only the clarrinet in a band, as played at theaters, as is places as don't go well with a chapel.

I'd lost sight on 'er for years thro' only knowin' of the family by Brown's aunt 'avin nussed Mrs. Webble with 'er two fust, as was both boys, and must be full my hage, if not more, and should as soon 'ave thought of the man in the moon a-knockin' at my door with a child in arms as that poor Mrs. Peltron, when I were a-livin' close agin Stepney Green.

I knowed 'er the moment she spoke, as were always a pretty-lookin', nice creetur, and certingly it were a wretched sight to see 'er of a wet day all draggled with a baby, as were a fine little feller, and 'er last, as I took and give a good wash to the fust thing with my own 'ands, and not afore he wanted it, for 'is poor mother 'adn't no tidy ways about 'er, and dressed 'im up in some old things as 'ad belonged to my Joe, and I were a-goin' to give a party as were goin' to hemigrate, but went off without a-lettin' me know.

I don't know as ever I see a finer child for five months old, and certingly the father's a good-lookin'

young feller, for I did used to meet 'em walkin' out when a-courtin', but a deal too gay for a married man, but she said as he were a good 'usband.

So I says, "Mary Ann, you must make the best on 'im now you've got 'im," and off she went arter a bit of dinner and a early cup of tea, arter tellin' me 'ow she'd been to see 'er brother, to ask 'im to 'elp 'er, and 'is wife 'ad come to the door and ordered 'er away thro' 'im bein' upstairs with the gout.

"But," I says, "'elp you! Wot, with all the money as your poor father left you!"

She shook 'er 'ead, and said as Frank were that full of speccylations on the turf.

I says, "I do 'ope you ain't let 'im get' 'old of your principles."

She said as everythink were gone, and she owed money for rent of two rooms.

Well, in them days we 'adn't much more than we could do with to make both ends meet, as the sayin' is, but I remembered as 'er mother 'ad been werry kind to me, and 'ad me there to plain needle-work when I fust married, and give me a little work-box with Tunbridge Wells on the top on it, so couldn't refuse 'er five shillin's, as was all the money as I'd got in my corner drawer, and my own earnin's, so didn't mind givin' it away, well

a-knowin' as Brown would wish me to 'elp any one as 'ad seen better days, as the sayin' is.

Poor thing, she didn't like to take it, and wouldn't, but for me a-sayin', "Oh, you're only borrerin' of it, as the sayin' is."

Not as I ever lends money, well a-knowin' as I'd better far give it, and then there's an end on it; not but wot many a one 'ave been made and saved too thro' borrered money; but then it all depends on who borrers, and wot for, cos there is a many as will borrer money to spend in drink, and fool it away, and not for to 'elp 'em in their business.

Well, poor Mrs. Peltron, she went off with a lighter 'art, tho' that baby were a good armfull for any one, but then a mother don't never seem to feel the weight, and I'm sure I never 'eard on 'er for years, when one day, as I were a-walkin' along by the Boro', I met 'er with a bundle of work she were takin' 'ome; not as I should 'ave knowed 'er from Adam, as the sayin' is, for she were a downright lump of misery and a bag of bones.

I wouldn't 'ardly believe it was 'er when fust she spoke, but, poor soul, she soon made me know 'er with a cough as 'oller as a drum, as the sayin' is.

I asked 'arter 'er 'usband, as made 'er shake 'er 'ead, and say as he wasn't wot she could wish, as 'ad 'ad four children and two buried; and when I

says to 'er, "I 'opes you're a-gettin' on pretty well," I see 'er eyes fill with tears; so in course I didn't ask no questions jest then, but give 'er a glass of ale with a sausage, and some bread and cheese 'ard by, and 'ad a talk with 'er about 'er 'usband, as she told me 'ad left 'er for months, arter all sorts of ill usage; not as he'd knocked 'er about, but there's ways of breakin' a woman's 'art tho' you may spare 'er a 'ole skin, and no bones broke neither.

I give 'er a trifle, tho' she couldn't bear to take it, tho' she told me as work night and day as she did, she couldn't get bread for 'erself and the boy and gal, and she said as there was places as only paid thrippence for makin' a shirt, as made me say "God forgive 'em as pays it, for sich wickedness."

I were dreadful sorry for 'er, and at partin' give 'er my address, and says, "When you wants a friend, Mrs. Peltron, do not leave me out, as am 'appy to 'elp you, and can," thro' rememberin' of 'er mother well, and 'er father too, for that matter, as wore a flaxen wig and a blue coat with breeches and gaiters, and a strict Wesleyan, as 'ad got a bit of money thro' a uncle by the mother's side.

It must 'ave been more than a month arter that, one November day, with a fog that thick as you might 'ave cut it with a 'atchet, as the sayin' is, when the gal come and said a boy wanted to speak

to me, as turned out that werry young Peltron as I'd give the good washin' to.

Not as he remembered it, cos 'owever should he at five months old?

He told me as 'is mother 'ad sent 'im with a note, as he give me, as were to borrer arf-a-crown.

So I give 'im a good bit of cold meat and bread, and a bit of apple-pie, and sent 'is mother two arf-crowns done up in a many papers, a-knowin' she must be bad off to trouble me.

While he were eatin' I see 'im lookin' werry un'appy, so I asks 'im about 'is mother's 'ealth, as he said 'er cough were orful bad, and as she didn't sometimes get up till tea-time.

So I thinks to myself, "There's a somethink wrong with 'er," but I didn't ask 'im nothink about 'is father, cos I'd 'eard he'd been werry wild, and don't 'old with askin' young people about their parent's faults.

So, when he'd done 'is bit of wittles, I give 'im the rest of the pie for to take 'ome to 'is little sister, and off he went.

I told 'im to be sure to come and let me know 'ow 'is mother were within a week at the werry outside; but more than a fortnight went by, and I never 'eard nothink of 'im, nor 'er neither.

He'd give me the address, as were down Chelsea way, as I knowed the part well, thro' bein' near the

Admiral Keppel, in the Fulham Road, as my dear mother remembered well a-standin' by itself in the fields, with not 'ardly a 'ouse atween it and the water-side, as is Old Chelsea Church, close agin Battersea Bridge, as were a-standin' afore Queen 'Lizybeth's time; not as she were ever one for to trouble a church—a wicked old wretch; and I'm sure as that bridge will come down with a run some day if they don't pull it down, as I've 'eard say belongs to some old ladies, so can't be interfered with, cos of Women's Rights, as shows as they're respected even in Chelsea.

Law bless me! 'ow the place is changed since I were a gal, as Chaney Walk were quite a retired place like; and as to Cremorne, it were a gentleman's 'ouse, all shet up cos the family didn't live in it; and parties did used to go to Woxall in boats, as I well remembers a-doin' myself to stand in the doorway for to see the company go in, as were a juvenile fate, as Queen Wictoria were a-goin' to when Princess, thro' a cousin of my dear mother's bein' cook there as did used to 'ave to roast chickens by the 'undred, and bile 'ams by the score, as were cut that thin like a bank-note, as made one 'am go a long way.

But, law! that's all past and gone, with not a westment of the place left, only a public-'ouse as stands where the grand entrance did used to be, as

is all built over like the rest of the world, so we didn't ought to be surprised, partickler when we looks at Shepherd's Bush, as were a reg'lar out-of-the-way place, when I were a gal, with footpads; the same as Brook Green, where I was took to a fair myself under four, and see wild beasts and a giant, as is now all 'ouses, with the buses a-runnin' to it from Regency Circus for thrippence, and will soon be tramways all over London, as is wot I calls march of intellec'; and not afore they're wanted, for I'm sure buses is that full as there's no gettin' a place in 'em, let alone the conductors not a-seein' you thro' a-talkin' to some one on the roof, or a-quarrelin' with a oppersition bus; and parties as is a-settin' inside won't tell the conductor on you; not as I blames 'em altogether for that, for I'm sure the abuse as I've got thro' a-stoppin' of a bus when inside myself, a-thinkin' as I see a party a-'ailin' of it to get in, and then not a-goin' that way, is enuf to make anyone keep their 'eads shet, as the 'Merrykins say.

I'm sure buses grows more ill conwenient, and is that narrer as there's no gettin' by parties' knees, as sticks 'em out all the way, besides always a-bustin' out larfin' when anyone as is stout gets in, tho' they may turn away their 'eads, or pertend as they're a-larfin' at somethink else.

I'm sure, the only thing as I wonders at is, 'ow-

ever parties did used to get about afore buses was inwented; and now, to think as you can go from Islin'ton to Queen's Elems in one, as did used to be a reg'lar day's work for anyone as couldn't afford a 'ackney coach, like poor Mrs. Disney, as lived near the "Goat in Boots" with 'er four children, as were left with werry little thro' 'im bein' only a clerk under Government, as a quinsey carried off under forty, and 'ad a old aunt livin' in Cross Street, Islin'-ton, as she did used to go and see, a-draggin' all the four at 'er 'eels, as the sayin' is, as put the old lady out, cos five does make a difference a-droppin' in unespected; tho' she never said a word, and I'm sure them poor children and their mother was 'arf the day on the road, and now could 'ave gone nearly all the way for thrippence a-'ead, as in course would be cheaper than dinin' at 'ome.

Werry soon arter, I got out of the bus at the "Keppel," I was at the 'ouse where poor Mrs. Peltron lived, as the good 'oman of the 'ouse opened the door, tho' up to 'er neck in soap-suds, and says to me, in askin' for Mrs. Peltron, "Are you a re-lation?"

I says, "No, but 'ave knowed 'er family."

"Then," she says, "you did ought to let 'em know, for she must go to the Infirmary, as them poor children ain't fit to be left alone with 'er."

I says, "Is she as bad as that?"

She says, "Why, bless your 'art, she ain't got a day's life in 'er; and as to nights, it's orful to 'ear 'er cough, and I really can't set up no longer with 'er, thro' 'avin' 'ard work all day, and my gal that delicate as I couldn't let 'er lose 'er rest, as the doctor is always afraid of 'er chest a-givin' way."

Jest then the door opened, and in come the boy, as 'ad been out for a little milk, as in course know'd me, and said, "Oh! Mrs. Brown, mother were a-talkin' about you last night."

So I says, "My dear, why not 'ave sent to me?"

"Oh!" he says, "mother said she would if she didn't get stronger soon."

I says, "Go and tell 'er I'm come to see 'er." So up he runs, and I says to the landlady, "I'm afeard they're 'arf starved."

She says, "They would 'ave been but for friends."

I see she meant 'erself, and says to 'er, "Would you mind a-sendin' for a few things for 'em?" and give 'er some silver, a-sayin' as I'd send the little boy down for to go the erran's, if she'd tell 'im wot to bring.

He come down jest then, a-sayin' as mother wanted to see me.

So I goes up, as were the fust floor back, and a room I couldn't 'ardly get in at the door, thro' the bedstead and a chest of drawers.

Poor dear! she were a-layin' on the bed, tho' partly dressed; and, as soon as she see me, says, "Oh! my kind old friend, you've been sent to comfort me."

I see the little gal look that terrified, as wasn't but fourteen, poor child; so I says to 'er, "My dear, will you go down and 'elp get some tea as the good lady in the parlour is a-goin' to get for me?"

She took 'old of 'er mother's 'and, as said to 'er, "Go, my love, for a werry few minits. You shall soon come back."

"Yes," I says, "I'll call you."

When the poor gal were gone, Mrs. Peltron she set up in the bed, and would 'ave fell back agin if I 'adn't 'ave caught 'er.

She says, "You're just in time; and all I 'ave to beg and pray is that you'll see my brother, so as not to let these poor dears go to the workus."

I says, "Does your 'usband know?"

She says, "Oh! don't let 'im 'ave 'em. My poor dear child! she mustn't go to 'im."

I says, "Be calm, that's a dear, and let me give you a little of this milk." And never were I more thankful for 'avin' brought my little flat bottle with me, as I give 'er a few drops out on in the milk.

"Now," I says, "you must 'ave a somethink more, as did ought to be a little beef-tea."

She says, "I can't touch it. The good woman of the 'ouse brought me some last night."

I thinks to myself, "No wonder you can't touch it, if it's wot I see in a basin."

"Well, then," I says, "'ave a cup of tea, and then you can talk to me;" for I see she were reg'lar wore out.

I made 'er as comfortable as I could on that wretched bed, and then calls to the little gal, as were a 'andy little thing, and werry soon got 'er mother a cup of tea thro' the little boy 'avin' come back with the things.

So I says, "My dears, you two go down and 'ave your teas, and leave mother to me for a bit, as will give 'er a cup and 'ave one myself the same time."

They didn't say nothink more than "Thankee, mum;" but I see as the gal watched 'er mother's eye like a link, as the sayin' is, and went without a murmur.

I'm sure the story as that poor thing told me of 'er married life were enuf to make ev'ry one turn monks and nuns and Catholic priests, as ain't allowed to marry, and wish as there wasn't no German bands in the world, as was the beginnin' of that Peltron a-takin' to the clarinet when a boy, as in course were a waggerbone life, as even goin' to play at a Circus didn't cure 'im on, but led 'im on

to the turf, as ruined 'im, so went back to the streets thro' a-pickin' up more money, and drunk 'enuf to swim in.

So I says, "Does he know 'ow ill you are?"

She says, "I don't want 'im to, for fear he should claim the children."

I says, "He aint likely to want them to drag up and down the streets; tho', in course, that gal's looks would make a-many drop a copper into a tamberine or a little tin sarcer, as, in a gen'ral way, is a fieldmale along with Punch and a babby."

She says, "No; let me die in peace. I've forgive 'im from the bottom of my 'art; so let me only 'ear you say as you'll go to my brother, and I shall be more easy in my mind."

I says, "You means your brother 'Ezekiah?"

She give a nod.

I says, "Go to him, that I will; and," I says, "I'll give 'im a bit of my mind over 'is be'aviour;" for I knowed I'd a rod in pickle for 'im, as the sayin' is. "But," I says to 'er, "the fust thing to be done is to make you a little more comfortable; so," I says, "try and get up a bit, and I'll make your bed;" as I see that poor child 'adn't 'ad the strength to do proper.

So, arter a bit, I'd made 'er more comfortable; and tho' she felt faint with the fatigue, I know'd she'd feel the benefit on it arter; and the little gal

'ad come up and 'elped me, as I see it give 'er pleasure to do.

"Now," I says, "Mrs. Peltron, do escuse me if," I says, "as I thinks you did ought to 'ave some one to set up with you."

She says, "Don't ask it. I couldn't abear one of them parish nusses."

"No," I says, "but," I says, "a respectable party, as will be relief to your child."

The little gal says, "Oh, no! don't let anyone come, mother. I won't leave you."

I see it wasn't no use a-talkin', but I says, "Where do the boy sleep?"

Says the little gal, "Mrs. Adams," as were the lady of the 'ouse, "gives 'im a shake-down in 'er parlour."

I thinks to myself, "She's a good sort." So, a-seein' as I couldn't do no more good, I says, "I must be a-goin', and will see you to-morrer arternoon, 'avin' been to them parties as you wants me to in the mornin'."

She thanked me werry much, and off I went, a-tellin' the good woman of the 'ouse as I thought she might linger a good bit; "tho'," I says, "in course, there's no tellin'."

'Ome I went, and the next day, afore eleven, I were at Mr. Webble's place of bis'ness, as is jest close by where 'is father did used to live.

The moment I see 'im, a-settin' at a desk behind a partition with rails at the top, I should 'ave knowed 'im for 'is father's son, tho' not the flaxen wig, nor yet them lower garments, as I could see thro' a little door as he opened a little way.

I 'ad jest see 'im years ago, and 'is brother too, when a young man; but, law! he never took no notice of me then, and wouldn't 'ave knowed me if he 'ad, for I did used to be a thread-paper for slimness, as is not my figger now, by no manner of means.

He'd a werry short way with 'im, 'ad Mr. Webble, as 'is name were 'Ezekiah, as were out of the Bible.

I soon told 'im my busyness, and got a werry short ans'er; but I'd knowed of some of 'is capers as he never dreamt on, when quite a young feller, as were a reg'lar 'ippercrit, and did used to gammon 'is father, as sent 'im to Australier, by a-gettin' out of a night arter prayers thro' the back kitchen winder.

So, when I begun a-tellin' 'im about 'is sister, he says to me, "I can't be bothered with no women a-comin' 'ere about sich things. Go to my wife, as will do wot's right."

"Oh!" I says, "certingly, as shall be glad for to know 'er, thro' 'avin' knowed so many of the family."

He says, "Who are you, then?"

So I told 'im.

He says, "I never 'eard on you. Did you ever belong to Bethesda?"

I says, "No, never; but I've knowed a-many as 'ave, and partikler one party as were considered a werry ser'ous young man; but," I says, "I knows a tale about 'im, not 'earsay, for I were a witness to it myself, as I don't think he ever told at the chapel, or any belongin' to it.

"But," I says, "I won't take up no more of your time, but will go and see your good lady, as is no doubt a kind 'art;" for I'd 'eard as he'd married a rich widder over in Australier, as 'ad 'arf built the chapel, and were as jealous on 'im as could be.

He says, "Ah! now I come to think on it, Mrs. Webble ain't at 'ome; so I'll send over to Mrs. Peltron—not as I'll ever own 'er, arter disgracin' the family."

"Ah!" I says, "it is a great disgrace in a woman to marry the man she loves; but," I says, "women are fools, and all men ain't as good as you, Mr. 'Ezekiah; for," I says, "I've knowed men afore now as 'ave left the woman as loved 'em and trusted 'em to die in the workus, and not care any more for their own child than if they was dogs or cats, and yet went to the same chapel. So," I says,

"don't be too 'ard on poor women, don't; for," I says, "you wouldn't like your sister to die in a workus, as I've seen some, as was treated shameful, under the cloak of religion too. So," I says, "don't be too 'ard; and if your good lady is out to-day, she'll be in some mornin', no doubt, and 'er and me can 'ave a talk over all manner, as ladies will when they gets together. So I wish you a good mornin'."

I'm sure, if ever I 'eard a bad word come out of any one's mouth thro' their clenched teeth, I 'eard a noath from pious Mr. 'Ezekiah, as was jest then called out of the room thro' a door close behind 'im by a clerk.

So he says, "Well, then, don't trouble yourself about my affairs, Mrs. What's-your-name."

I says, "Mrs. Brown is my name, as am not ashamed on it, nor my 'usband neither; for, tho' there's a-many as goes by the same name, we're a deal too well known to mind others 'avin' it."

"Ah!" he says, "no doubt, no doubt. I'm sorry I can't ask you to stop, Mrs. Brown, so would thank you to make yourself scarce;" as were rude be'aviour, but I didn't take no notice, but only said to 'im as were goin' out of the room by that door behind the partition, "If you're a-goin' to send to Mrs. Peltron, it 'ad better be soon; and," I says, "I do 'ope as, bein' sich a good man, you'll not be too 'ard

on them as 'ave got their faults, and 'ave paid dear for 'em."

Out of the place he walks, and I were a-goin' too, when at the door I meets full butt, as the sayin' is, a stout-lookin' woman, craped off like a 'orse at a funeral, as stared at me, and says, "Pray, wot may your busyness be with my 'usband?"

He 'eard 'er woice, and come a-'urryin' out afore I could speak, and says, "Oh! my love, it's all right. This good lady 'ave called about poor Mary Ann."

"What Mary Ann?" says she, a-tossin' 'er 'ead. "Just attend to your busyness, Mr. W., and let me ask this person a few questions."

He darted away, and I says, "I'm come about your 'usband's sister, as is dyin'."

She says, "What's that to us? We've discarded 'er."

I don't think as I ever did feel so angry as at that woman bein' sich a brute, and really pitied that man in 'avin' sich a wife, and should 'ave turned away and left the place, if that woman 'adn't 'ad the impidence to say, "'Ow do we know it's true? as may be only a beggin'-letter dodge."

So I turns back and says, "I'll make you prove your words."

She says, "Don't talk to me, as am a lady."

I give a good look at 'er. Now, I'm one as

never forgets a face—leastways, not if I gets a good look at it. So I says, "Escuse me, but ain't we beknown to one another years and years ago."

She says, "Oh, dear! no. I were brought up abroad."

"Well," I says, "I think I can tell you somethink about them as knowed you once."

She says, "Oh, dear! no. Quite a mistake."

"No," I says, "it ain't Mrs. 'Artwell, as lodged once in Condick Street, Commercial Road, as 'er 'usband went back'ards and for'ards to Antwerp?"

She dropped into a chair like anyone with a bullet thro' the 'art, and grasps out, "Who are you?"

"Oh!" I says, "don't be alarmed at me. I'm one as keeps a secret, but never forgets parties as I've been called up to in the middle of the night, by the lady of the 'ouse where she lodged, and sailed along with the man, as give 'er 'is name under the month."

She says, "Wot can I do for you?"

I says, "Nothink in the world. I don't want to even know you. Only," I says, "you make your 'usband act like a man by 'is own sister, or I don't know what mayn't 'appen."

Jest then, Webble come back, and it were fun to see them two that civil to me, as she says to 'im, "My dear, this is werry sad about your poor sister, as would go over and see 'er this werry arternoon,

only but for a partikler engagement. But you must go in the mornin'; and you'd better give this good lady, as 'ave took the trouble to be so kind as come and tell us—and I'm sure we're that obliged to 'er —some money jest for the present, if she'll be so good."

He says, "By all means, my dear;" and took and wrote a cheque for five pounds, and says, "Give it to 'er, with my love, please; and I'm comin' to see 'er. And now, let me see you to the omnibus."

Says 'is wife, "There ain't no occasions; the carridge can take this good lady to the station, and come back in time for us."

I says, "Oh, dear! no. I knows my way about, I thank you; and am glad as you both sees things in their proper lights, and wishes you a werry good day." And out I goes, and see the carridge a-standin' at the door, as were only a one-'orse open thing, as they was a-goin' into a bazaar in, as was bein' 'eld for their chapel, as I'm sure I didn't envy 'em.

I got down early in the arternoon to see poor Mrs. Peltron, and give 'er the money. She says, "I shouldn't mind a-shakin' 'ands with my brother, but pray don't let me see 'is dreadful wife."

I says, "You needn't be afeard. She'll never come near you. But," I says, "is there anythink as you wants?"

"Ah!" she says, "no—at least, not wot I can ever 'ope for. But," she says, "I've been thinkin' as there's one as I wants to see."

I says, "Ain't he to be found?"

She says, "No; and it's better not, for," she says, "I couldn't wish 'im to 'ave the children."

I see a great change in 'er, and so did the woman of the 'ouse, as I went and spoke to for to give 'er over two pound rent, as she were werry thankful for, thro' bein' poor 'erself; and says to me, "It's my opinion as she'll go off like a snuff of a candle arter one of them fits of coughin'; for," she says, "I set up with 'er till jest on five, and then 'er little gal got up."

"Well," I says, "I've made it all right at 'ome to stop with 'er to-night; so," I says, "that child must get a good night's rest."

She says, "She shall sleep with my dorter."

I says, "All right;" and so we settled it. Not as the child wanted to leave 'er mother, and would not if I 'adn't promised 'er solemn I'd call 'er up in a minit if 'er mother were wuss.

So she went to bed satisfied like, and so did the boy, as was both dotin' fond of the poor soul.

I'd give 'er a little arrer-root about nine, and 'ad a bit of supper with the good woman of the 'ouse, and 'ad set myself down quiet for a night's watchin',

and am sure as I were not a-dozin', when I 'eard a tap at the street-door.

I listened, and there come another tap, and then down I goes, and says, "Who's there?" a-openin' the door a little ways.

"Does Mrs. Peltron lodge 'ere?" says a man's voice.

I says, "Yes; but you must really come in the mornin' if you wants to see 'er," a-thinkin' it were some one as 'er brother 'ad sent.

The voice says, "I must see 'er now, as is life and death."

So I opens the door, and there stood a man as I should 'ave knowed for Peltron among a thousand, tho' he'd growed a beard and were stouter.

I werry nigh dropped the candle, I were so flustered; but I says to 'im, "Let me break it to 'er as you are 'ere, for she's dozin', as the suddin' shock might kill 'er."

He says, "Let me go to 'er, as won't kill 'er, I know."

I says, "Do you know 'ow bad she is?"

He says, "Only to-day; but let me go to see 'er."

I says, "Give me a minit or two, as can follow me up stairs and listen at the door."

So up we goes as gentle as mice, and I goes into the room, a-leavin' of the door a jar, and if she wasn't jest a-wakin' up, with sich a bright colour in

'er cheeks as made 'er look quite 'ansome and young agin.

She says, "Mrs. Brown," she says, "I'm so 'appy."

I says, "I'm so glad, my dear."

She says, "Yes, I've seen 'im; he was standin' by me, lookin' so kind, so bright, and I 'eld out my arms to 'im, and he folded me to 'is 'art."

I didn't say a word, but drawed back, so as to let 'im pass, as he did, and was on 'is knees by the bedside in a instant, a-claspin' of 'er to 'is 'art, a-sayin', "Forgive, Oh! pray forgive."

In course I didn't stop, but went up to where the gal was asleep, and she woke up the moment I opened the door.

So I says, "My love, get up."

She says, "Ah, mother is wuss."

I says, "No, but," I says, "come down; your father is here."

She turned pale, and says, "Oh! don't let 'im ill-use mother."

I says, "No fear of that; I'm a-goin' to fetch your brother;" and so I did, and in a few minits they was all in the room together.

I could 'ear 'em a-sobbin', and then I listened, thro' bein' afraid about 'er, but all as I 'eard were "Our Father," as they was a-sayin' together.

So I shet the door to close, and went down stairs

agin with a thankful 'art, a-saying to myself, "This is 'Women's Rights' indeed."

I'm sure it was over 'arf a 'our afore any on 'em moved about, and Mrs. Adams she come down 'earin' all the movin' about the 'ouse, and 'er and me set a-talkin' till the boy come down, and says, "Mrs. Brown, come to mother, do."

I 'urries up to the room, a-fearin' the wust, but she were quite calm, and says, a-'oldin' out 'er 'and to me, "Promise me, my kind friend, as you'll stand by this poor feller in 'is sorrer, for," she says, "he can't bring 'is mind to part, but it must be."

As to 'im he were a-settin' by the bed, distracted with that choky grief.

So I says to 'im, "Come," I says, "be a man," I says, "and do your dooty, and make 'er 'appy, by promisin' to do wot she wants with the children."

She says, "He 'ave promised all as I've asked; as 'ave come back to me of 'is own accord."

"And will never leave you agin?"

"Ah!" I thinks to myself, "you're like a many more in this world, as your repentance 'ave come too late." I see she were werry faint, so give 'er a little wine and water, as made 'er fall into a doze. I waited till she woke up agin, and then I wished 'er good-bye, a-feelin' as I couldn't do 'er no more good jest then and were only in the way; not but wot he took the front room at once, and we

moved 'er into it afore I left, and 'ad a good talk with 'im, as 'ad been over in Merryker, and 'ad a dreadful illness, but found 'is mother there, as 'ad gone over with 'er second 'usban', and were a true woman, and took 'im in thro' bein' in a good busyness, tho' a widder, but made 'im come over as soon as ever he got well for to fetch 'is wife and children.

Tho' the sight on 'im had done that poor creetur good, she were too far gone ever to rally. I see 'er a good many times that week, and were with 'er when she died like a lamb, that quiet and 'appy, as made it come lighter to 'im and the poor children; and she knowed afore she died as 'er bit of property as he'd made away with weren't legal, and they got it back agin, as I were glad on, all thro' the feller as 'ad been and adwanced 'im the money on it not 'avin' give 'im one-tenth of its walue.

In course he fretted dreadful when she were gone, and sailed for Merryker a week arter 'er funeral, and I've 'ad one or two letters from the gal, as says 'er grandmother's werry good to 'em, and they're as 'appy as they can be without their poor mother, as is, I 'ope, better off in that world where all will get their rights, whether men or women, as is wot we all 'opes for, tho' it'll be a bad look out for some on us if we only gets them.

But my advice to all women is not to be a-stand-

in' too much on their rights, but look out for their duties and do them, as is werry simple, and will make every one respect 'em, let alone a clear conscience, as is the best thing arter all; and now, as the world 'ave gone on for a good bit without 'avin' no women doctors, nor yet lawyers, nor sojers, nor bishops neither for that matter, why, I don't think as things is a goin' to be turned upside down, now-a-days, cos, you see, natur steps in and pints out where a woman's place is, as is by a man's side, for to be 'is comfort and 'elp, but not for to take 'is place and go on jest like 'im.

Cos we all knows as a man may go to the bad and be brought back to 'is senses werry often by a good wife; but, law bless me, if man and wife was both to go wrong together, why, the children must foller, and there'd be a pretty kettle of fish, as the sayin' is.

I'm sure I've knowed wives as 'ave put up with everything for their children's sakes, and in the end got 'appy 'omes thro' the respect as their 'usbands 'ad for 'em; but if we're to 'ave all the women jest for all the world a-goin' on like men, there'll be nice doin's; and women must go to the wall in the end, cos they're the weakest, and as to they're a-talkin' and givin' of lectures, men won't go to 'ear 'em, and I'm sure no women won't sit and listen to one another's clack, cos they're all a deal too fond of

talkin' themselves, and wot's more, will all talk at once, jest for all the world like a jack-daw's parlyment, as the sayin' is.

And as to men a-consentin' for to take their turn at the wash-tub, or anythink like that, they might once in a way or so, but would never stick to it, and I'm sure no true woman wouldn't like to see 'er 'usband a-doin' of it; and for my part I never would let Brown walk up and down the room of a night with the babby, tho' certingly our Joe were a frightful restless child, but I never would give in to none of them ways, but made 'im lay still and go to sleep from the werry fust, as is the only plan, and nobody knows 'ow soon they understands as they're to be quiet and go to sleep.

But, law, 'owever should a man know anythink about them things, as is a woman's provinces arter all, as the sayin' is, and for my part I'd as soon see a woman with whiskers and a beard, as is a disgustin' fenomenor, as I see once myself in a show close agin Whitechapel Church, as I'd see a man a-messin' and a-mollycodlin' about a 'ouse, as is quite out of place, and wants a dish-clout at 'is tail, as would serve 'im right for a-pokin' of 'is nose where he ain't wanted, and a-darin' to interfere with what is really "Women's Rights."

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